WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
RICHARD III
RICHARD III
Simplified Version by AST
VOLUME ONE

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Location: London. A street.

Characters: RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), CLARENCE (Duke of Clarence), BRACKENBURY (Lord Brackenbury), and others.

RICHARD enters alone.

RICHARD:

Now that the civil war is finally over, and our king has been crowned—the son of the late Duke of York—making this a glorious summer after all our troubles. The storm clouds of war have burst and now hang like a wet blanket over the battlefields. Now our faces are smooth instead of wrinkled with worry. Instead of marching off to war, we dance in the King's palace. Instead of riding armored horses into battle, we ride beautiful ladies. Instead of playing war songs on drums and trumpets, we play sweet love songs on lutes. And instead of marching troops through the streets, we see elegant men walking proudly through the city. But I, who was not born to be a ladies' man, nor made to stare at my own reflection—I'm deformed, unfinished, and sent out into the world before my time, like something half-made. I'm so ugly that dogs bark at me when I limp past them.

In this weak, peaceful time of fancy dancing and showy flattery, I have nothing to do but waste my time hating the pointless pleasures of these days. So, I have decided to prove myself a villain and hate the idle pleasures of these times. I've set up schemes—dangerous plots—using drunken prophecies, lies, and dreams to turn my brother Clarence against my other brother, the King. And if King Edward is as honest and loyal as I am cunning and dishonest, then today Clarence will be locked up in the Tower because of a prophecy that says "G" will murder Edward's children. Let your thoughts sink down, Clarence—I'm going to get you. I'm determined to be king one day, or else die trying. So let me get started.

Enter CLARENCE, guarded by BRACKENBURY, with guards.

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One moment. I see my brother Clarence being led away under guard. I'll act concerned and surprised when I see him. Brother, what's going on? Why are you being guarded like this?

CLARENCE:

My brother, the King—in his wisdom—has decided to lock me up in the Tower. He's been influenced by some jealous people who told him I'm a threat. He's acting on their advice, not because he really believes anything bad about me.

RICHARD:

That's ridiculous. What reason does he have to lock you up?

CLARENCE:

Some prophecy he heard—that someone with a name starting with "G" would one day murder his children. And since my name is George, he's afraid that's me. But Richard, that's the only reason. Some other nonsense the King's heard, but that's the main one.

RICHARD:

And do men lock up their brothers just because of something some old woman dreamed up? The King must be stupid to fall for that. If that's all the evidence he has, he might as well lock me up too. I'm as likely to be the one—since my name starts with G too. They could say I'm the one. And anyway, this is just another one of the Queen's schemes. I'd bet money that's who's behind it. She's the one who's got the King wrapped around her finger. Has he actually been questioned, or have they just arrested him without even a chance to defend himself?

CLARENCE:

They've questioned me, and they've made it clear they're not going to listen to anything I have to say. That's how it is with kings—once they decide, they don't like being wrong.

RICHARD:

Well, this is terrible of the King. I wish I could talk to him and get this sorted out. But you know how I am—I can't stand the sight of his wife, the Queen. I don't get along with her or any of her relatives. Actually, if you want to know the truth, I haven't been near the King or any of the rest of them. Brother, I'm not welcome around them. Since they forced me to turn

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in my most trusted man—a man who served me faithfully—I've stayed away from court. But I'll tell you what: I'll go talk to the King for you. I'll do whatever I can to get you out. In the meantime, you shouldn't be so down about it. Your brother is the King after all. He'll come to his senses. He's just been manipulated.

CLARENCE:

I know that. But he's so stubborn once he's made up his mind, there's no changing it.

RICHARD:

We'll see. I'll go talk to him.

RICHARD turns to BRACKENBURY.

RICHARD: (to BRACKENBURY)

Brackenbury, you'd better treat my brother well. He's a good man, whatever the King says.

BRACKENBURY:

I will, my lord. I'm under orders, but I'll treat him as well as the situation allows.

RICHARD:

That's all anyone can ask. We'll get him out soon enough. (to CLARENCE) I'm very sorry to see you like this, brother.

CLARENCE:

I appreciate that, brother.

CLARENCE exits with BRACKENBURY and the guards.

RICHARD: (alone)

Go on then. I'll follow you soon enough. I'm only sorry I'm not the one who put you there. It's just a matter of time until I have you completely out of the way. Remember what I told you about that prophecy: they say "G" will kill the King's children. That's me—Richard—and I'm the one who's going to do it. But it won't be until I've killed you first. So, hurry up and get comfortable in the Tower, brother. I'm going to see the King. I'll make sure he hates you even more than he already does, by telling him how proud and

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arrogant you've been acting. It won't take much. The King's already jealous of anyone who might be more popular than him.

So, I'll tell him you hate his children, and his wife, and his relatives. And I'll do it so convincingly that he won't be able to help believing me. If I have my way, the King will want you dead. And I'll keep this going until I've worn him down to nothing. For I'm not the man I pretend to be. I can smile and smile while I'm plotting murder. I can weep crocodile tears over something I'm actually glad about. I can lie convincingly, and when I'm telling the truth I can make it sound like a lie. I've been trained in all these tricks since I was a boy. I'm so good at them that no one suspects anything.

I'll go to the King's palace. But before I get there, I'll have to get rid of my brother's wife, Anne. She's the only one standing in my way. If I can just marry her, I'll be one step closer to my goal. But I have to get to her before she reaches the church where King Henry VI is buried, where she's going to mourn his death. I'll catch her on the way. But I'm getting ahead of myself. I need to focus on the task in front of me. (looks offstage) Here come some of the Queen's relatives. They've heard Clarence is locked up, and they're probably celebrating. They'd better get used to it. I'll be locking up more than just Clarence soon enough.

RICHARD exits.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Location: London. A street leading to St. Paul's Cathedral.

Characters: LADY ANNE, GENTLEMEN accompanying her, the CORPSE OF KING HENRY VI carried in a coffin by men with halberds, RICHARD, and attendants.

Enter the funeral procession carrying the coffin of KING HENRY VI. LADY ANNE walks with the coffin, wearing mourning clothes. She is accompanied by GENTLEMEN in mourning attire.

LADY ANNE:

Set the coffin down here, please. Rest it on the ground. And while I mourn the death of Henry, my former father-in-law, let all of you observe the

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proper customs of grief. You servants, wave your green branches in mourning. And you students, ring the church bells as sadly as you can. You mourners, look down at the ground in sorrow. Help me mourn the man who was murdered—the great King Henry, whose body you see here.

Gentlemen, wait just a moment while I say a few words over his body. Forgive me, but I must grieve in my own way.

She kneels beside the coffin.

I can't even look at your wounds without weeping, King Henry. They are like open mouths that cry out for revenge. Your blood has been spilled—not by any enemy soldier, but by the hand of a member of your own family, your own nephew, Richard. God, I pray you, bring disaster upon the man who spilled this innocent blood. Let him die before his time, without any chance to confess his sins. Let him die a painful, sudden death, so that all the world will know it is your punishment.

If he has a wife, let her be miserable, and may his children be born with deformities to punish him for what he did to me. May his children be so ugly and misshapen that they cause their mother constant pain and make her wish she had never given birth to them. Let that be the punishment for this man's evil deeds.

Now, holy King Henry, hear my prayer. As I pour out my tears over your wounds, I pray that your spirit in heaven will look down and punish Richard for killing you. And I pray that Edward, your son and my husband, will find peace. And that my soul, when I die, may find rest with yours.

She stands.

Look, gentlemen, look at how Richard stabbed Prince Edward, my husband —here, in his chest. See the cuts all over his body. Poor man, his wounds are bleeding fresh again, as if they know I'm here. The blood is flowing again, as if it wants revenge. There is no evil so terrible as the evil in Richard's heart. There is no devil that can match his cruelty.

You monster, you devil, you deserve to be dragged out of this world and sent straight to hell where you belong. You butcher of my husband, you murderer of my father-in-law, may you suffer for all eternity. I curse you with everything I have.

RICHARD enters.

RICHARD:

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Woman, stop cursing me. I'm not as bad as you think. Calm down, holy lady, and let me speak.

LADY ANNE:

I wish I had the power to strike you down like lightning, you fiend. I would kill you myself if I could. If I could get my hands on your heart, you devil, I would tear it out with my teeth. You think I'm afraid of you? You murderer. You have no honor. You don't deserve to live.

RICHARD:

You're speaking curses at me, not using your reason, lady. I haven't done anything to deserve this.

LADY ANNE:

You haven't done anything? You killed my husband, you monster. And you killed my father-in-law. You haven't done anything? You have done so much evil that the word "nothing" doesn't belong anywhere near you.

RICHARD:

Your husband was nothing compared to the man who killed him.

LADY ANNE:

What man is that?

RICHARD:

Why, the man you should love. A better man than Edward.

LADY ANNE:

There is no man better than my husband.

RICHARD:

There is a better man. Let me tell you who he is.

LADY ANNE:

Who?

RICHARD:

I am. But I need you to listen calmly.

LADY ANNE:

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You? You are the devil himself. I can't listen to anything you have to say. You ruined me. You destroyed everything I loved. Your name alone makes my heart freeze with fear.

RICHARD:

That's because you don't know me. If you knew who I really am, you would feel differently.

LADY ANNE:

I know exactly who you are. You are Richard, the Duke of Gloucester. You are the man who killed my husband. You are the monster who killed King Henry, the saintly king, while he was praying. You are the one who is guilty of both murders.

RICHARD:

I didn't kill your husband. Edward did that to himself. He attacked me first. I had to defend myself.

LADY ANNE:

That's a lie. You killed him. You murdered him in cold blood. The wounds on his body are proof of that. They didn't get there by accident.

RICHARD:

I did not kill him. Your own anger and hatred killed him. It was your own fault, really. If you had been kinder to him, maybe he would still be alive.

LADY ANNE:

How dare you blame me for my husband's death? How can you even say that? I loved him more than anything. I would have done anything to protect him. You are the one who killed him. You are the one who is to blame.

RICHARD:

I swear to you, lady, I did not kill your husband. I admit that I did kill King Henry. But that was an of war. Edward was different. He attacked me. I had no choice but to defend myself.

LADY ANNE:

You are lying. You are a liar and a murderer. I will never forgive you for what you have done. I curse you. I curse you with every breath I have.

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RICHARD:

If you curse me, then curse yourself as well. You are the reason your husband is dead. If you had been a better wife, he would still be alive.

LADY ANNE:

That is the most evil thing anyone has ever said to me. How can you blame me for his death? I did everything I could to make him happy. I loved him with all my heart.

RICHARD:

If you loved him so much, why did you not protect him? You were there when he died. You could have saved him. But you did nothing.

LADY ANNE:

I was not there. I was far away when he was killed. I did not know what was happening until it was too late.

RICHARD:

If you had been there, you would have seen me fight him. You would have seen that he attacked first. You would have seen that I had no choice but to defend myself.

LADY ANNE:

I do not believe you. I will never believe you. You are a monster. You are a murderer. You are the most evil man in all of England.

RICHARD:

If I am so evil, then why are you still talking to me? Why do you not just leave? Why do you stand here and argue with me?

LADY ANNE:

I am talking to you because I want you to know how much I hate you. I want you to know that I will never forgive you for what you have done. I want you to know that I curse you with every breath I take.

RICHARD:

If you hate me so much, then why do you look at me with such soft eyes? Your eyes are not filled with hate. They are filled with something else.

LADY ANNE:

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Do not flatter yourself. I look at you with disgust. I look at you with loathing. I look at you with everything but love.

RICHARD:

Your eyes say otherwise. Your eyes say that you might be able to love me if you let yourself.

LADY ANNE:

That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. I would rather die than love you. I would rather burn in hell than love you. I would rather suffer every pain imaginable than love you.

RICHARD:

Those are strong words. But words are just words. You can say you hate me all you want. But I see something else in your eyes.

LADY ANNE:

You see nothing. You are imagining things. There is no love in my heart for you. There is only hate. There is only anger. There is only pain.

RICHARD:

Then why do you not walk away? If you hate me so much, why do you stand here and talk to me? Why do you not just leave?

LADY ANNE:

I am leaving. I am going to walk away from you right now. And I never want to see you again.

She starts to walk away.

RICHARD:

Wait. Please, just wait a moment. Let me say one more thing.

LADY ANNE:

I have nothing more to say to you. I am done with you.

RICHARD:

Just one more thing. Please.

She stops but does not turn around.

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I know you hate me. I know you have every reason to hate me. But I want you to know that I did not kill your husband. I swear it on my life.

LADY ANNE:

Your life means nothing. Your word means nothing. I do not believe you.

RICHARD:

Then let me prove it to you. Let me show you that I am not the monster you think I am.

LADY ANNE:

How could you possibly prove that? You have done too much evil to ever be forgiven.

RICHARD:

Let me love you. Let me care for you. Let me spend the rest of my life making up for what I have done.

LADY ANNE:

You are insane. You think I would ever let you love me? You killed my husband. You killed my father-in-law. You have destroyed everything I ever loved. And now you want me to let you love me?

RICHARD:

I know it sounds crazy. I know it sounds impossible. But I am telling you the truth. I want to make things right. I want to make you happy.

LADY ANNE:

You can never make me happy. You can never make up for what you have done. The only way you could ever make me happy is if you were dead.

RICHARD:

Then kill me. If my death would make you happy, then take this sword and kill me right now.

He offers her his sword.

Go ahead. Take it. Plunge it into my chest. End my life if that is what you want.

She takes the sword but hesitates.

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What are you waiting for? I killed your husband. I killed your father-in-law. You have every right to kill me. Do it. Do it now.

She raises the sword but cannot strike.

I see you cannot do it. You cannot kill me. That means there is something in your heart that is not hate. There is something there that might become love if you let it.

LADY ANNE:

I do not love you. I will never love you. I just... I cannot bring myself to kill you. That does not mean I love you. It means I am not a murderer like you.

RICHARD:

You are not a murderer. You are a kind and gentle woman. That is why I love you. That is why I want to spend my life with you.

LADY ANNE:

You love me? You have a strange way of showing it. You killed everyone I ever loved. And now you say you love me?

RICHARD:

I know it sounds strange. I know it sounds impossible. But it is true. I love you more than anything in this world.

LADY ANNE:

I do not believe you. I cannot believe you. You are a liar. You are a monster. You are...

RICHARD:

I am whatever you want me to be. If you want me to be good, I will be good. If you want me to be kind, I will be kind. If you want me to love you, I will love you with everything I have.

She drops the sword.

LADY ANNE:

I do not know what to think. I do not know what to feel. Everything is so confusing.

RICHARD:

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Let me help you. Let me take care of you. Let me be the one who makes you happy.

LADY ANNE:

How can I ever be happy with you? How can I ever forget what you have done?

RICHARD:

You do not have to forget. You just have to forgive. Let me prove to you that I can be a good man. Let me prove to you that I can be the husband you deserve.

LADY ANNE:

I do not know. I just do not know.

RICHARD:

Take this ring. Wear it as a sign that you will think about it. Wear it as a sign that there is hope for us.

He places a ring on her finger.

LADY ANNE:

I do not know if I can do this. I do not know if I can ever love you.

RICHARD:

Just give me a chance. That is all I ask. Just give me a chance to prove myself to you.

She looks at the ring on her finger.

LADY ANNE:

I will think about it. That is all I can promise. I will think about it.

RICHARD:

That is all I ask. That is all I will ever ask.

She exits with the funeral procession.

RICHARD: (alone)

What do you think of me now? Has any woman ever been won over like this? Has any man ever been so successful with a woman who hated him so

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much? I have won her. I have won the woman who should hate me more than anyone in the world. I have won her with nothing but words.

Is this possible? Is it really possible that I have won her love? She hates me. She should hate me. I killed her husband. I killed her father-in-law. And yet she looks at me with soft eyes. She takes my ring. She promises to think about me.

I am not a handsome man. I am not a man who women fall in love with at first sight. I am deformed. I am ugly. I am not the kind of man who wins women with his charm. And yet I have won her. I have won the woman who should hate me more than anyone in the world.

I must be careful. I must not lose what I have gained. I will go to her. I will court her. I will make her love me. And when she loves me, I will have what I want.

But first, I must deal with other matters. My brother Clarence is in the Tower. He will not be there for long. I will make sure of that.

But for now, I will go to my new love. I will go to Lady Anne. And I will make her mine.

RICHARD exits.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Location: London. The royal palace.

Characters: QUEEN ELIZABETH, LORD RIVERS (her brother), LORD GREY (her son from her first marriage), the MARQUESS OF DORSET (her son from her first marriage), the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, the DUKE OF NORFOLK, LORD HASTINGS, LORD STANLEY (also called Earl of Derby), RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), QUEEN MARGARET (widow of King Henry VI), and others.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY, and the MARQUESS OF DORSET. They are gathered at court, looking worried.

RIVERS:

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Your Majesty, calm yourself. King Edward is in good hands. The doctors say he will recover fully. There is no reason to fear for his life.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

If he dies, I am lost. My children will be lost. Everything we have built will be destroyed.

GREY:

Do not speak of such things, Mother. The King is young. He will recover. There is no reason to think otherwise.

DORSET:

The doctors are confident. The King has survived worse illnesses before. He will survive this one as well.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I wish I could be as confident as you are. But I know what will happen if he dies. Richard of Gloucester will take the throne. And he will destroy everything I have worked for. He will destroy my children. He will destroy me.

RIVERS:

Richard is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. There are others who would oppose him. Lord Hastings, for one, would never support Richard's claim. And the common people love your children. They would not let Richard harm them.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

The common people love whoever is in power. And Richard knows how to make himself popular. He smiles. He flatters. He pretends to be humble. But underneath, he is a monster. I have seen it in his eyes. I have seen it in the way he looks at me and my children.

Enter BUCKINGHAM, NORFOLK, HASTINGS, STANLEY, and others. They approach the Queen.

BUCKINGHAM:

Your Majesty, we have come to tell you that the King's condition is improving. The doctors say he will be well enough to receive visitors soon. There is no need to worry.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Thank you, Lord Buckingham. That is good news. I will go to him at once.

She moves to leave but stops as RICHARD enters.

RICHARD:

Ah, the Queen and her relatives. All gathered together, I see. What a happy family. What a loving family. All so concerned about the King's health. Or is it something else that concerns you?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I do not know what you mean, Lord Richard. We are here because we care about the King. Is there something wrong with that?

RICHARD:

No, nothing wrong. Nothing at all. It is just interesting to see how quickly you all gathered when you heard the King was ill. Almost as if you were waiting for this moment. Almost as if you were hoping for it.

RIVERS:

That is an insult, Lord Richard. We love the King. We would never wish him harm.

RICHARD:

Would you not? You, Lord Rivers? You, who have risen so high because of the King's favor? You, who were nothing before the King married your sister? You would never wish him harm? Forgive me if I find that hard to believe.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Richard, I will not let you speak to my brother that way. He has been loyal to the King. He has been loyal to the crown. He has done nothing to deserve your suspicion.

RICHARD:

Your brother has done nothing? He and the rest of your family have done nothing but take advantage of the King's weakness. They have taken everything for themselves. They have pushed aside those who served the King faithfully. They have turned the court into their own private kingdom.

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DORSET:

That is not true. We have served the King faithfully. We have done nothing wrong.

RICHARD:

Nothing wrong? You, Dorset, were not even in the country when the King needed you. You were off enjoying yourself while others fought for the crown. And now you come back expecting to be rewarded? Expecting to be given power you did not earn?

GREY:

My brother was serving the King's interests abroad. He was doing exactly what the King asked him to do.

RICHARD:

The King asked him to leave? The King asked him to abandon his duties? I find that hard to believe. But then again, the King is weak. He is easily influenced. Especially by those who share his bed. Especially by those who know how to whisper in his ear.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

How dare you speak to me that way? I am the Queen. I am your brother's wife. I deserve your respect.

RICHARD:

Respect? You have done nothing to earn my respect. You have done nothing but manipulate my brother. You have done nothing but take everything for yourself and your family. You have even taken my brother Clarence and locked him in the Tower. And for what? For some prophecy? For some lie told by a fortune teller?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I had nothing to do with Clarence's imprisonment. That was the King's decision. He acted on advice from his council, not from me.

RICHARD:

Do not lie to me. I know how you work. I know how you whisper in his ear. I know how you twist his mind against those who threaten you. Clarence was a threat to you, so you got rid of him. It is that simple.

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HASTINGS:

My lords, please. This arguing does no one any good. The King is ill. We should be focusing on his recovery, not fighting among ourselves.

BUCKINGHAM:

Lord Hastings is right. We need to set aside our differences. The King needs us to be united. If we fight among ourselves, we only weaken the crown.

RICHARD:

Unite? With them? With the people who have stolen everything from me? With the people who have pushed me aside and taken what is rightfully mine? I will never unite with them. I would rather die.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You see, my lords? You see what kind of man he is? He wants nothing but power. He wants nothing but to destroy anyone who gets in his way. He does not care about the King. He does not care about the kingdom. He only cares about himself.

RICHARD:

And you care about anyone but yourself? You, who have taken everything? You, who have made sure your family controls everything? You are the one who only cares about power. You are the one who would do anything to keep what you have stolen.

Enter QUEEN MARGARET. She stands apart from the others, watching.

QUEEN MARGARET: (aside)

Look at them. Look at them all. Fighting over power. Fighting over the throne. And none of them see me. None of them remember what they did to me. But I remember. I remember everything.

She steps forward.

QUEEN MARGARET:

You there. You think you have power? You think you are safe? I was once where you are now. I was once the Queen of England. I had a husband. I had a son. I had everything. And look at me now. Look at what they did to me. Look at what they took from me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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Queen Margaret. I did not see you there.

QUEEN MARGARET:

No, you did not see me. No one sees me. No one remembers me. But I remember you. I remember all of you. I remember what you did to my husband. I remember what you did to my son. I remember how you stole everything from me.

RICHARD:

Why are you here, Margaret? You have no place in this court. You have no power here. You are nothing.

QUEEN MARGARET:

Nothing? I am nothing? You, Richard, are the one who is nothing. You are a monster. You are a deformed, twisted creature who should have died at birth. You are the reason everything is wrong with this kingdom. You are the one who has brought nothing but pain and suffering to everyone around you.

RICHARD:

Your curses mean nothing to me, old woman. You are a ghost. You are a shadow. You have no power over anyone.

QUEEN MARGARET:

No power? I have the power of words. I have the power of curses. And I curse you, Richard. I curse you and everyone who has wronged me. May you never know peace. May you never know happiness. May you destroy everything you touch, including yourself.

She turns to QUEEN ELIZABETH.

And you, Elizabeth. You think you are safe? You think your children will be safe? You will lose everything. You will lose your husband. You will lose your children. You will lose everything you have ever loved. And you will watch it all happen, powerless to stop it.

She turns to RIVERS, GREY, and DORSET.

And you, Rivers. And you, Grey. And you, Dorset. You will all die. You will all be destroyed. And no one will remember you. No one will mourn you. You will be forgotten, like dust in the wind.

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RIVERS:

Queen Margaret, please. You are speaking madness. We have done nothing to deserve your curses.

QUEEN MARGARET:

Nothing? You have done nothing? You have taken everything from me. You have destroyed my family. You have stolen my crown. And you say you have done nothing? You are all guilty. You are all responsible. And you will all pay for what you have done.

RICHARD:

Enough of this. Margaret, leave this place. You have no right to be here. You have no right to speak to the Queen or anyone else in this court.

QUEEN MARGARET:

I will leave. But I will not forget. And neither will God. He will punish you for what you have done. He will bring justice to all of you. And when that day comes, you will remember me. You will remember everything I have said.

She exits.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

That woman is dangerous. She may be powerless now, but her words still carry weight. People remember her. People remember what happened to her. If she spreads these curses around the city, it could turn people against us.

RICHARD:

Let her speak. No one listens to her anymore. She is a ghost. She is a memory. She cannot hurt us.

HASTINGS:

Lord Richard is right. Queen Margaret has no power. Her curses are empty words. We have nothing to fear from her.

BUCKINGHAM:

But we do have something to fear from each other. This fighting among ourselves is dangerous. If we cannot unite, the kingdom will suffer. We need to put aside our differences and work together for the good of the country.

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RICHARD:

Work together? With them? I would rather work with the devil.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

The feeling is mutual, Richard. I would rather trust a snake than trust you.

RICHARD:

A snake? You are the snake. You and your whole family. You have slithered your way into power. You have wrapped yourselves around my brother and squeezed the life out of him. And now you want to pretend you are the victims? You want to pretend you are the ones who have been wronged?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I am the Queen. I am the mother of the King's children. I have done nothing wrong. I have only tried to protect my family.

RICHARD:

Protect your family? You have destroyed my family. You have turned my brother against me. You have locked my other brother in the Tower. And now you want me to believe you are innocent? You want me to believe you have done nothing wrong?

HASTINGS:

My lords, please. This is getting us nowhere. We need to calm down. We need to think clearly. The King is still alive. There is still time to make things right.

BUCKINGHAM:

Lord Hastings is right. We should all go and visit the King. Let him see that we are united. Let him see that there is no conflict among us. That will help him recover more than anything else.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

That is a good idea. Let us go to the King. Let us show him that we are all loyal to him and to the crown.

RICHARD:

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Fine. Let us go to the King. But do not think this is over. Do not think I have forgotten what you have done. I will remember. And one day, you will pay for everything.

He exits with BUCKINGHAM, HASTINGS, and the others.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: (to her relatives)

You see what we are dealing with? Richard is dangerous. He is more dangerous than any of us imagined. We need to be careful. We need to watch our backs. If the King dies, Richard will come for us. And he will not stop until we are all dead.

RIVERS:

We will be ready for him. We have friends. We have allies. We will not let him destroy us.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I hope you are right. I hope we are strong enough to survive what is coming. But I am afraid. I am afraid for my children. I am afraid for everything we have built. And I do not know if we can stop what is coming.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Location: London. The Tower of London.

Characters: CLARENCE (Duke of Clarence), BRACKENBURY (Lieutenant of the Tower), SIR THOMAS VAUGHAN, TWO MURDERERS, and the KEEPER of the Tower.

Enter CLARENCE and BRACKENBURY. They are in a chamber in the Tower.

BRACKENBURY:

Your grace, I am sorry that I have to keep you locked up like this. But I have my orders. I cannot let you leave.

CLARENCE:

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I understand, Brackenbury. You are just doing your duty. I do not blame you for any of this. It is my brother Richard who is to blame. Or maybe it is the Queen. I do not know anymore. I only know that I am here, and I cannot leave.

BRACKENBURY:

The King is ill, your grace. Perhaps when he recovers, he will release you. He is not a cruel man. He would not keep his own brother locked up forever.

CLARENCE:

The King is easily influenced. When he is well, the Queen will whisper in his ear. She will tell him more lies about me. She will make him believe I am a threat. And I will stay here until I rot.

BRACKENBURY:

I hope that is not true, your grace. I hope you will be released soon.

CLARENCE:

Tell me, Brackenbury. Why do you think I am here? What reason did they give for locking me up?

BRACKENBURY:

I was told it was because of some prophecy. Something about someone whose name starts with "G" killing the King's children. They say your name is George. They say that is why you are here.

CLARENCE:

A prophecy. They lock me up because of a prophecy. Some old woman's dream. Some fortune teller's lie. And my brother believes it. He believes I would kill his children. His own brother.

BRACKENBURY:

I am sure the King does not really believe it, your grace. He is just being cautious. He has children now. He wants to protect them.

CLARENCE:

Protect them from me? I would never hurt those children. I love them. They are my nephews. I would die before I let anything happen to them.

BRACKENBURY:

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I know, your grace. Everyone knows that. That is why this is so strange.

CLARENCE:

It is not strange. It is the Queen. She is behind this. She has always hated me. She has always been jealous of my influence over the King. And now she has found a way to get rid of me.

Enter SIR THOMAS VAUGHAN.

VAUGHAN:

Your grace, I have come to tell you that the King's condition has worsened. The doctors are worried. They do not know if he will survive.

CLARENCE:

My brother is dying? And I am locked up here, unable to see him? Unable to say goodbye? This is cruel. This is more than cruel. This is evil.

BRACKENBURY:

I am sorry, your grace. I wish there was something I could do.

CLARENCE:

There is nothing anyone can do. I am trapped here. My brother is dying. And I cannot even be with him at the end.

VAUGHAN exits.

BRACKENBURY:

Your grace, you should try to rest. You look tired. You look like you have not slept in days.

CLARENCE:

I cannot sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see terrible things. I have nightmares. Horrible nightmares.

BRACKENBURY:

What kind of nightmares, your grace?

CLARENCE:

Last night, I dreamed I was on a ship. We were sailing across the ocean. And then, suddenly, I fell overboard. I was in the water, drowning. And I saw the most terrible things. The bottom of the ocean was filled with gold and

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pearls and treasure. But it was also filled with skeletons. The bones of men who had drowned. And among them, I saw my father-in-law, the Earl of Warwick. And he looked at me with such anger. Such hatred. And he said, "What punishment can be worse than hell for someone like you?"

BRACKENBURY:

That is a terrible dream, your grace. But it is only a dream. It does not mean anything.

CLARENCE:

It felt so real. I could feel the water in my lungs. I could feel myself drowning. And then I woke up, gasping for air. And I was here. Locked in this room. Trapped.

BRACKENBURY:

Your grace, you should try to sleep again. I will stay here with you. Nothing will happen to you.

CLARENCE:

I cannot sleep. I am afraid to sleep. I am afraid of what I will see.

BRACKENBURY:

Then let me tell you a story. Something to take your mind off your dreams. Would you like that?

CLARENCE:

Yes. Tell me a story. Anything to pass the time. Anything to keep my mind off my troubles.

BRACKENBURY:

There was once a king who was betrayed by his own brother. The brother wanted the throne for himself. So he spread lies about the king. He told everyone the king was mad. He told everyone the king was a tyrant. And the people believed him. They turned against the king. And the brother took the throne for himself.

CLARENCE:

That is not a very comforting story, Brackenbury.

BRACKENBURY:

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No, your grace. But it has a happy ending. The king escaped. He gathered his loyal followers. And one day, he returned and took back what was rightfully his. And the brother was punished for his betrayal.

CLARENCE:

I wish my story had a happy ending. But I do not think it will. I think I am going to die in this tower. I think my brother Richard will make sure of that.

BRACKENBURY:

Your grace, you cannot think that way. Lord Richard is your brother. He loves you. He would never hurt you.

CLARENCE:

Would he not? Then why am I here? Why did he not stop this from happening? Why did he not speak to the King on my behalf?

BRACKENBURY:

He said he would speak to the King. He said he would try to get you released.

CLARENCE:

He said that to my face. But what did he say behind my back? What lies did he whisper in the King's ear? I know my brother Richard. I know what he is capable of.

Enter the TWO MURDERERS.

BRACKENBURY:

Who are you? What are you doing here?

FIRST MURDERER:

We have orders from the King. We are to speak with the Duke of Clarence.

BRACKENBURY:

The King is ill. He is not giving orders. Who sent you?

SECOND MURDERER:

We have our orders. That is all you need to know. Now let us through.

BRACKENBURY:

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I cannot let anyone see the Duke without proper authorization. Show me your orders. Show me the King's seal.

FIRST MURDERER:

We do not have anything with the King's seal. We were told to come here by Lord Richard. He said you would let us through.

BRACKENBURY:

Lord Richard? I was not told anything about this. I cannot let you in without proper authorization.

SECOND MURDERER:

Lord Richard said you would say that. He said to tell you that the King has given him authority to deal with matters of state. And this is a matter of state. Now let us through.

BRACKENBURY:

I do not know about this. I do not like this. Lord Richard should have sent word. He should have sent something with the King's seal.

FIRST MURDERER:

Are you going to let us through? Or do we have to go back to Lord Richard and tell him you refused to follow his orders?

BRACKENBURY:

I... I suppose it is all right. If Lord Richard sent you, then I have no choice. But I do not like this. I do not like this at all.

BRACKENBURY exits.

CLARENCE:

What do you want with me? Who are you?

FIRST MURDERER:

We are here to carry out orders, your grace. Orders from Lord Richard.

CLARENCE:

What orders? What has my brother told you to do?

SECOND MURDERER:

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He told us to kill you, your grace. He said you are a threat to the kingdom. He said you need to be dealt with.

CLARENCE:

Kill me? My brother wants to kill me? That cannot be true. Richard would never do that. He is my brother. He loves me.

FIRST MURDERER:

That is what he said, your grace. He said you are a traitor. He said you have been plotting against the King. He said you deserve to die.

CLARENCE:

That is a lie. I have never plotted against anyone. I am loyal to the King. I am loyal to my brother. Richard knows that. He knows I would never betray him.

SECOND MURDERER:

He said you would say that. He said you would try to talk your way out of it. But we have our orders. We have to carry them out.

CLARENCE:

Please. I beg you. Do not kill me. I have done nothing wrong. Let me speak to Richard. Let me speak to the King. They will tell you the truth. They will tell you I am innocent.

FIRST MURDERER:

We cannot do that, your grace. We have our orders. If we do not carry them out, we will be the ones who die.

CLARENCE:

Then take me to Richard. Take me to the King. Let them see me. Let them hear what I have to say. If they still want me dead, then so be it. But at least let me speak for myself.

SECOND MURDERER:

We cannot take you anywhere, your grace. We have to do it here. Now.

CLARENCE:

Then let me pray. Let me pray before I die. Surely you can grant me that.

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FIRST MURDERER:

Pray if you want. It will not change anything. You are going to die either way.

CLARENCE kneels to pray.

SECOND MURDERER:

Look at him. He is praying like a holy man. It almost makes me feel bad for him.

FIRST MURDERER:

Do not feel bad. He is a traitor. He deserves to die. That is what Lord Richard said.

SECOND MURDERER:

I know. But still. He looks so pitiful. On his knees, begging for his life. It does not feel right.

FIRST MURDERER:

It does not matter how it feels. We have our orders. Now let us get this over with.

CLARENCE:

God, have mercy on my soul. Forgive me for my sins. And forgive my brother Richard for what he has done to me. He does not know what he is doing. He is blinded by ambition. He is blinded by hate.

FIRST MURDERER:

Are you finished? It is time to go.

CLARENCE:

Wait. Please. Just a few more moments. Let me finish my prayers.

SECOND MURDERER:

We do not have a few more moments. We have to do this now.

FIRST MURDERER:

Come on. Let us get it over with.

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The FIRST MURDERER moves toward CLARENCE with a knife. CLARENCE struggles.

CLARENCE:

No. Please. Do not do this. I will give you anything. Gold. Land. Whatever you want. Just let me live.

FIRST MURDERER:

We do not want your gold. We want your life. Now hold still.

They struggle. CLARENCE fights back.

SECOND MURDERER:

He is stronger than he looks. Hold him down.

They overpower CLARENCE. The FIRST MURDERER stabs him.

CLARENCE:

Richard... my brother... how could you...

He dies.

FIRST MURDERER:

It is done. He is dead.

SECOND MURDERER:

What do we do now? Do we go back to Lord Richard?

FIRST MURDERER:

Yes. We go back and tell him the job is done. He will pay us. And then we get out of here.

SECOND MURDERER:

I do not feel right about this. He was innocent. I could see it in his eyes. He was telling the truth.

FIRST MURDERER:

It does not matter if he was innocent. We had our orders. Now come on. Let us go.

They start to leave but stop as BRACKENBURY enters.

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BRACKENBURY:

What happened? I heard shouting. What did you do?

He sees CLARENCE's body.

No. No. What have you done? What have you done?

FIRST MURDERER:

We carried out our orders. That is all.

BRACKENBURY:

Orders? Whose orders? Who told you to do this?

FIRST MURDERER:

Lord Richard. He said the Duke was a traitor. He said he needed to die.

BRACKENBURY:

Lord Richard said that? Lord Richard ordered this?

SECOND MURDERER:

That is what he told us. He said it was for the good of the kingdom.

BRACKENBURY:

For the good of the kingdom? Killing an innocent man? Killing the King's own brother? How is that for the good of the kingdom?

FIRST MURDERER:

We do not know, sir. We just did what we were told.

BRACKENBURY:

You will pay for this. Both of you. You will pay for what you have done.

He draws his sword.

FIRST MURDERER:

We were just following orders, sir. You cannot blame us for that.

BRACKENBURY:

I can blame you. And I will. You murdered the King's brother. You will hang for this.

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SECOND MURDERER:

We need to get out of here.

The TWO MURDERERS run off.

BRACKENBURY:

Stop! Come back here!

He chases after them but they escape.

BRACKENBURY: (to himself, looking at CLARENCE's body)

What have they done? What have they done? The King's own brother. Murdered in his cell. And Richard ordered it. Richard, his own brother. This will destroy the kingdom. This will tear everything apart.

He kneels beside CLARENCE's body.

I am sorry, your grace. I am sorry I could not protect you. I am sorry I let them in. If only I had known. If only I had refused. You would still be alive.

He stands.

I have to tell the King. I have to tell him what has happened. He needs to know. He needs to know what Richard has done.

He exits.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Location: London. The royal palace.

Characters: KING EDWARD IV (sick, in a chair), QUEEN ELIZABETH, LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, LORD HASTINGS, LORD STANLEY (Earl of Derby), RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), and others.

Enter KING EDWARD IV in a chair, looking weak and ill. He is surrounded by QUEEN ELIZABETH, LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, LORD HASTINGS, LORD STANLEY,

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and other nobles. RICHARD enters separately, standing apart from the others.

KING EDWARD:

Good. You are all here. I have gathered you together because I have something important to say. I am dying. We all know it. The doctors have told me. There is no point in pretending otherwise.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, do not say such things. You will recover. The doctors said there is hope.

KING EDWARD:

There is no hope, Elizabeth. I can feel death creeping over me. My time is short. And before I go, I want to make peace among you. I want to leave this kingdom united, not torn apart by fighting.

He looks around at everyone.

I have seen how you look at each other. I have heard the whispers. I know there is hatred between some of you. Between my wife's family and my brother Richard. Between Lord Hastings and Lord Rivers. All of you, fighting for power. All of you, waiting for me to die so you can tear each other apart.

RICHARD:

Your Majesty, I have no hatred in my heart. I am loyal to you and to the crown. Whatever others may say about me, I have always served you faithfully.

KING EDWARD:

I know, Richard. I know you have served me faithfully. But I also know you do not get along with my wife's family. And that must stop. I am commanding all of you to make peace. Here. Now. In front of me.

He takes QUEEN ELIZABETH's hand.

Elizabeth, I want you to take Richard's hand. I want you to swear that you will be friends. That you will work together for the good of the kingdom.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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My lord, I will do whatever you ask. If you want me to make peace with Richard, I will make peace.

She turns to RICHARD and offers her hand. RICHARD hesitates for a moment, then takes it.

RICHARD:

I swear by the heavens above that I will put aside all hatred. I will be a loyal friend to the Queen and to her family. I will work with them for the good of the kingdom. And I ask God to strike me down if I break this oath.

KING EDWARD:

Good. That is good. Now, Rivers. Hastings. I want you to make peace as well. You have been enemies for too long. It is time to put aside your differences.

LORD RIVERS:

Your Majesty, I have no quarrel with Lord Hastings. Whatever differences we have had in the past, I am willing to let them go.

LORD HASTINGS:

And I am willing to do the same. For the good of the kingdom. For the good of our King.

They shake hands.

KING EDWARD:

God bless you both. This is what I wanted to see. Unity. Peace. If you can all work together, the kingdom will be safe. My children will be safe.

He starts to cough, weak from the effort.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, you need to rest. You have done enough for one day.

KING EDWARD:

No. There is more I need to say. There is something else.

He looks at everyone.

My brother Clarence. I know he is in the Tower. I know I put him there. And I regret it. I regret it more than anything I have ever done.

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RICHARD:

Your Majesty, you did what you had to do. Clarence was a threat to the kingdom. He was plotting against you.

KING EDWARD:

Was he? I do not know anymore. I have heard so many lies. So many whispers. I do not know what is true and what is false.

He turns to RICHARD.

Richard, I want you to go to the Tower. I want you to release Clarence. Tell him I am sorry. Tell him I was wrong to lock him up. Tell him I want to see him before I die.

RICHARD:

Your Majesty, I will do as you command. But are you sure? There are those who say Clarence is dangerous. There are those who say he still plots against you.

KING EDWARD:

I do not care what they say. He is my brother. I will not die with him locked up in that tower. Go. Go now. Bring him to me.

RICHARD:

I will go at once, Your Majesty.

RICHARD exits.

KING EDWARD: (to the others)

You see? This is what I wanted. Peace among my family. Peace among my nobles. If you can all work together, my son will have a strong kingdom when he takes the throne.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, you are exhausting yourself. Please. Rest.

KING EDWARD:

I will rest soon enough. I will have all of eternity to rest.

He leans back in his chair, looking pale and weak.

LORD STANLEY:

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Your Majesty, there is one more thing. Something you should know before Richard returns.

KING EDWARD:

What is it, Stanley?

LORD STANLEY:

Your brother Clarence. I have heard something. Something I think you should know.

KING EDWARD:

What have you heard?

LORD STANLEY:

I have heard that Richard may not be as loyal as he seems. I have heard that he may have been the one who spread the rumors about Clarence in the first place.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What are you saying, Lord Stanley?

LORD STANLEY:

I am saying that Richard may have been playing all of us against each other. I am saying that he may be the one who convinced the King to lock up Clarence. And now he may have other plans.

KING EDWARD:

That cannot be true. Richard is my brother. He has served me faithfully for years. He would never betray me.

LORD HASTINGS:

Your Majesty, Lord Stanley may have a point. I have seen things. Things that make me wonder about Richard's true intentions.

KING EDWARD:

What things? What have you seen?

LORD HASTINGS:

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I have seen him whispering in the ears of nobles. I have seen him building alliances. I have seen him preparing for something. I do not know what. But it is something.

KING EDWARD:

You are all imagining things. Richard is my brother. He is loyal. He would never betray me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, perhaps we should wait and see what happens when Richard returns. If he brings Clarence back, then we will know he is loyal. If he does not...

KING EDWARD:

If he does not? What are you saying? Are you suggesting Richard would harm his own brother?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I am suggesting nothing, my lord. I am simply saying we should wait and see.

Enter RICHARD, looking troubled.

KING EDWARD:

Richard. You are back. Where is Clarence? Did you release him?

RICHARD:

Your Majesty... I went to the Tower. But I was too late.

KING EDWARD:

Too late? What do you mean, too late?

RICHARD:

Clarence is dead, Your Majesty. He was murdered in his cell.

KING EDWARD:

Dead? Clarence is dead? How? Who did this?

RICHARD:

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The guards say two men came to see him. They claimed they had orders from the King. They forced their way in. And they killed him.

KING EDWARD:

Orders from the King? I gave no such orders. Who would do this? Who would kill my brother?

RICHARD:

I do not know, Your Majesty. But I will find out. I will find the men who did this. And I will bring them to justice.

KING EDWARD:

Clarence is dead. My brother is dead. And I put him in that tower. I locked him up. I believed the lies. I believed he was a traitor. And now he is dead.

He begins to weep.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, you cannot blame yourself. You did not know. You could not have known.

KING EDWARD:

I should have known. I should have seen the truth. Richard told me Clarence was a traitor. Everyone told me Clarence was a traitor. But he was not. He was innocent. And now he is dead.

He turns to RICHARD.

Richard. You told me Clarence was plotting against me. You told me he was dangerous. Why did you tell me those things?

RICHARD:

Your Majesty, I only told you what I had heard. I believed the rumors. I believed Clarence was a threat. I was wrong. And I will carry that guilt with me for the rest of my life.

KING EDWARD:

You were wrong. We were all wrong. And now my brother is dead. My own brother.

He slumps in his chair, overcome with grief and exhaustion.

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LORD STANLEY:

Your Majesty, you need to rest. This has been too much for you.

KING EDWARD:

Rest? How can I rest when my brother is dead? How can I rest knowing I helped kill him?

RICHARD:

Your Majesty, please. Do not blame yourself. I am the one who told you those things. I am the one who should be blamed.

KING EDWARD:

We are all to blame. All of us. We let our hatred and suspicion get the better of us. We let ourselves be divided. And now Clarence is dead because of it.

He looks at everyone.

This is what happens when we fight among ourselves. This is what happens when we let hatred control us. My brother is dead. And more will die if you do not put aside your differences. Promise me. Promise me you will not let this happen again.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

We promise, my lord. We will work together. We will put aside our differences. For the good of the kingdom. For the good of your children.

LORD HASTINGS:

I swear it. I will put aside all hatred. I will work with the Queen's family. I will do whatever is necessary to keep the kingdom strong.

LORD RIVERS:

And I swear the same. We will be united. We will not let hatred divide us again.

KING EDWARD:

Good. That is good. Now leave me. I need to be alone. I need to think. I need to mourn my brother.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

My lord, I will stay with you. You should not be alone.

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KING EDWARD:

No. Leave me. All of you. I want to be alone with my thoughts.

Everyone begins to exit. RICHARD is the last to leave. He pauses at the door and looks back at the King.

RICHARD: (aside, to himself)

Clarence is dead. Good. One less person standing in my way. The King is dying. That is even better. Soon he will be gone. And then the throne will be empty. And I will be there to take it.

He exits.

KING EDWARD: (alone)

Clarence. My brother. I am sorry. I am so sorry. I believed the lies. I believed you were a traitor. And now you are dead. And I am dying. And soon we will meet again. Soon we will be together. And I will ask for your forgiveness. I will beg for your forgiveness. And I hope you will give it. I hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me.

He closes his eyes, weak and exhausted.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Location: London. The royal palace.

Characters: The DUCHESS OF YORK (mother of King Edward, Clarence, and Richard), two CHILDREN (the young Duke of York and a young boy), QUEEN ELIZABETH, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, LORD RIVERS, and others.

Enter the DUCHESS OF YORK with two young CHILDREN. She is in mourning, dressed in black. The children are the son of Clarence (a young boy) and the young Duke of York (son of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth).

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Speak to me, someone. Tell me what is happening. I have heard nothing. No one tells me anything. I am the mother of the King. I am the mother of Clarence. I am the mother of Richard. And yet no one tells me what is going on.

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She looks at the children.

You two. You are young. You do not know what grief is yet. But you will learn. You will learn soon enough.

BOY (son of Clarence):

Grandmother, I am sad. Father is gone. They say he is dead. Is it true? Is my father really dead?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Yes, my child. Your father is dead. He was taken from us. Taken before his time.

BOY:

How did he die? No one will tell me. They just say he is gone. But I want to know how.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

He was murdered. In the Tower. Someone killed him. And no one knows who. Or maybe they do know. Maybe they are just afraid to say.

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

My uncle Clarence is dead? I did not know. No one told me.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

No one tells anyone anything. They keep their secrets. They whisper in corners. And we are left in the dark, wondering what is happening to our family.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH. She is in mourning, her hair wild, her clothes disheveled. She is weeping.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Oh, what has happened? What has happened to us?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth. What is it? What has happened? Is it the King? Is Edward...

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

The King is dead. Edward is dead. He died this morning. He closed his eyes and never opened them again.

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DUCHESS OF YORK:

My son. My son is dead. First Clarence. Now Edward. Two of my sons, gone. Taken from me.

She begins to weep.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

And what will happen to us now? What will happen to my children? Richard will take the throne. He will destroy us all.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Richard is my son too. He is your brother-in-law. He will protect you. He will protect your children.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You do not know Richard like I do. You do not see what I see. He is a monster. He is a devil in human form. He will stop at nothing to get what he wants. And what he wants is the throne.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

You are wrong. Richard is not like that. He may be ambitious. But he is not a monster.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Ask yourself this, mother. Who was in the Tower when Clarence died? Who had access to him? Who had the most to gain from his death?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

You cannot mean…

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I mean exactly what I say. Richard killed Clarence. And now Edward is dead. And Richard will be king. And my children will die. I know it. I feel it in my bones.

The YOUNG DUKE OF YORK steps forward.

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

Mother, do not say that. Uncle Richard is our family. He would not hurt us.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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You are young. You do not understand. You do not know what men will do for power. You do not know what Richard will do.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, calm yourself. You are speaking madness. Richard is not a murderer. He would never kill his own brother.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Would he not? Then who did? Who else had the motive? Who else had the opportunity? Clarence was in Richard's way. And now he is gone. Edward was in Richard's way. And now he is gone. Who will be next? My children? Me?

She falls to her knees, weeping.

BOY (son of Clarence):

My father is dead. My uncle the King is dead. And now everyone is fighting. What will happen to us? What will happen to me?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Come here, child. Come to your grandmother.

She opens her arms. The boy runs to her.

I will protect you. I will protect all of you. No matter what happens, I will keep you safe.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You cannot protect us. No one can protect us. Richard has all the power now. He controls the army. He controls the nobles. He controls everything.

Enter LORD RIVERS, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, and others. They look worried and frightened.

RIVERS:

Your Majesty, we have bad news. Richard has taken control of the Tower. He has stationed his own men there. He says it is for the protection of the kingdom.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Protection? He is not protecting anyone. He is preparing to strike. He is making sure no one can stand against him.

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DORSET:

We need to get the young prince. We need to bring him to London. He needs to be crowned as soon as possible. Before Richard can do anything.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Yes. Yes, you are right. My son is the King now. He is Edward V. He needs to be crowned. He needs to take the throne before Richard can steal it.

RIVERS:

I will go to Ludlow. I will bring the prince to London. We will have him crowned immediately.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Go. Go now. Do not wait. Do not let anyone stop you.

RIVERS moves to leave.

DORSET:

Wait. What about Richard? What if he tries to stop us? What if he sends his men to intercept us?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Then you fight. You fight for my son. You fight for the rightful king. Do whatever you have to do. Just get him to London.

RIVERS:

We will, Your Majesty. We will not let Richard take the throne.

RIVERS exits.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, you need to be careful. Richard is still my son. I love him. But I know what he is capable of. Be careful. Do not provoke him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Provoke him? I am not provoking anyone. I am trying to protect my children. That is all I have ever tried to do.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

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I know. I know. But Richard is dangerous. You need to be careful. You and your children need to be careful.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What about your grandchildren? What about the children of Clarence? Are they safe?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

I will take care of them. I will keep them safe. They will stay with me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

And what about me? What about my children? Who will protect us?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

God will protect you. God will protect all of us. That is all we can hope for.

Enter RICHARD, accompanied by BUCKINGHAM and other nobles. He looks confident and powerful.

RICHARD:

Ah, here is the Queen. And my mother. And all the little children. What a sad gathering. What a mournful scene.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What do you want, Richard? Have you come to gloat? Have you come to celebrate my husband's death?

RICHARD:

Celebrate? No. I have come to mourn. Edward was my brother. I loved him. I grieve for him just as you do.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You grieve? You? The man who killed Clarence? The man who has been plotting against my husband for years? You expect me to believe you grieve?

RICHARD:

I did not kill Clarence. I do not know who killed Clarence. But it was not me. And I am tired of being accused of things I did not do.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

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Richard, is it true? Did you kill your brother?

RICHARD:

Mother, how can you ask me that? How can you believe such lies? I loved Clarence. He was my brother. I would never hurt him.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Then who did? Who killed my son?

RICHARD:

I do not know. But I will find out. I will find the men who did it. And I will bring them to justice.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You will find them? You will bring them to justice? You are the one who gave the order. Everyone knows it. Everyone knows you killed Clarence.

RICHARD:

Everyone knows? Who knows? Who has been spreading these lies? Was it you? Have you been whispering in corners, telling people I killed my own brother?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I do not need to whisper. The truth speaks for itself.

RICHARD:

The truth? You do not know the truth. You have never known the truth. You have spent your whole life spreading lies. Lies about me. Lies about Clarence. Lies about everyone who stood in your way.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Stop it. Both of you. Stop this fighting. My son is dead. The King is dead. And all you can do is argue? All you can do is blame each other?

RICHARD:

Mother, I am not the one who started this. The Queen is the one who accuses me. The Queen is the one who spreads lies about me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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I spread no lies. I speak only the truth. You killed Clarence. You have been plotting against my husband for years. And now you want the throne for yourself.

RICHARD:

The throne? Is that what you think? You think I want the throne? The throne belongs to your son. He is the King now. I will serve him. I will protect him. That is my duty.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You will protect him? You will serve him? I do not believe you. I will never believe you.

RICHARD:

Believe what you want. It does not matter. What matters is the kingdom. What matters is that we are united. We cannot let our personal feelings get in the way of what is best for England.

BUCKINGHAM:

Lord Richard is right. We need to be united. The young King needs us to work together. We cannot let our differences tear the kingdom apart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Work together? With him? I would rather die.

RICHARD:

Then die. But do not take your children with you. Do not let your hatred destroy them.

He turns to the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK.

Young prince. Your father is dead. Your uncle Clarence is dead. But you still have family. You still have me. I am your uncle. I will protect you. I will take care of you.

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

Uncle Richard, I am afraid. Everyone is fighting. Everyone is angry. I do not understand what is happening.

RICHARD:

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There is nothing to be afraid of. I will take care of everything. You will see. Everything will be fine.

He puts his hand on the boy's shoulder. QUEEN ELIZABETH watches, filled with fear.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Do not touch him. Do not touch my son.

RICHARD:

I am his uncle. I have every right to touch him. I have every right to protect him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You will not protect him. You will destroy him. Just as you destroyed Clarence. Just as you destroyed my husband.

RICHARD:

Your husband died of illness. Everyone knows that. I had nothing to do with it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Did you not? Then why did he die so suddenly? Why did he die just when you were gaining power?

RICHARD:

You are hysterical. You are not thinking clearly. Perhaps you should go and rest. You have been through a great deal.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, perhaps Richard is right. You need to rest. You need to calm down.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I will not rest. I will not calm down. Not while my children are in danger. Not while Richard is free to do whatever he wants.

RICHARD:

I am not doing anything. I am trying to help. I am trying to keep the kingdom together. But you will not let me. You will not let anyone help.

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BUCKINGHAM:

Your Majesty, please. We need to think about the future. We need to think about the young King. He needs to be brought to London. He needs to be crowned. That is the most important thing right now.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Yes. Yes, you are right. My son needs to be crowned. And he will be. And when he is, Richard will have no power. He will be nothing.

RICHARD:

I will be whatever the King wants me to be. If he wants me to serve him, I will serve him. If he wants me to step aside, I will step aside. I am loyal to the crown. I have always been loyal to the crown.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You are loyal to nothing but yourself. You are loyal to no one but yourself.

RICHARD:

Say what you will. It does not matter. What matters is the kingdom. What matters is the future of England.

He turns to leave.

I will go now. I have things to do. The kingdom does not run itself. But I will be back. And when I return, I expect to see a different attitude. I expect to see unity. I expect to see peace.

RICHARD exits with BUCKINGHAM and the other nobles.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: (to her son)

Come here, my child. Come to your mother.

The YOUNG DUKE OF YORK goes to her.

We need to leave. We need to go somewhere safe. Somewhere Richard cannot find us.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Where will you go? There is nowhere safe. Richard has eyes everywhere. He has spies everywhere.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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Then we will hide. We will go into sanctuary. The church will protect us. Richard cannot touch us there.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Sanctuary? You are going to hide in sanctuary?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Yes. It is the only place we will be safe. The only place Richard cannot reach us.

She takes her son by the hand.

Come. We need to go. We need to leave now.

She exits with her son and DORSET.

DUCHESS OF YORK: (to the BOY, son of Clarence)

Come, child. You will stay with me. I will protect you. I will keep you safe. Whatever happens, you will always have a home with me.

She takes the boy's hand and leads him out.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Location: London. A street.

Characters: Three CITIZENS.

Enter three CITIZENS. They are ordinary men of London, standing together in the street, talking quietly among themselves.

FIRST CITIZEN:

Good morning, neighbor. Have you heard the news?

SECOND CITIZEN:

What news? I have heard nothing. I have been working all morning. I have not spoken to anyone.

FIRST CITIZEN:

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The King is dead. King Edward passed away last night. They are saying he died of illness. But no one really knows.

SECOND CITIZEN:

King Edward is dead? That is terrible news. He was a good king. He kept the peace. He kept the country strong.

THIRD CITIZEN:

I am not so sure about that. He was a good king in some ways. But he was also weak. He let his wife's family control everything. He let them take power that should have belonged to others.

FIRST CITIZEN:

That may be true. But at least there was peace. At least we could live our lives without fear. Now? Who knows what will happen?

SECOND CITIZEN:

The young prince will be king. Edward V. He is just a boy. But he will have advisors. He will have nobles to guide him. Surely they will keep the peace.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Advisors? Nobles? Those are the ones we need to worry about. The nobles are the ones who cause all the trouble. They fight among themselves for power. They do not care about us. They only care about themselves.

FIRST CITIZEN:

You are right about that. When the King was alive, he kept them in check. He made sure they did not get out of control. But now? Now there is no one to stop them.

SECOND CITIZEN:

I have heard things. I have heard that the Duke of Gloucester is making his move. They say he has already taken control of the Tower. They say he is gathering his supporters.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Richard of Gloucester? He is a dangerous man. Everyone knows that. He is ambitious. He is ruthless. And he will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

FIRST CITIZEN:

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What does he want? Does he want to be king?

SECOND CITIZEN:

That is what people are saying. They say he has been plotting for years. They say he killed his own brother Clarence to clear his path to the throne.

THIRD CITIZEN:

I have heard that too. But who knows if it is true? There are always rumors. There are always lies. You cannot believe everything you hear.

FIRST CITIZEN:

True. But where there is smoke, there is fire. And there is a lot of smoke around Richard of Gloucester.

SECOND CITIZEN:

What about the Queen? What is she doing? Surely she will not let Richard take the throne. She has her own family. She has her own power.

THIRD CITIZEN:

The Queen has fled to sanctuary. She took her children and hid in the church. She is afraid of what Richard might do.

FIRST CITIZEN:

Sanctuary? That does not sound good. If the Queen is hiding in sanctuary, things must be worse than we thought.

SECOND CITIZEN:

What about the young prince? He is supposed to be the king. Where is he?

THIRD CITIZEN:

He is on his way to London. They are bringing him from Ludlow. Lord Rivers is escorting him. But who knows what will happen when he arrives?

FIRST CITIZEN:

Do you think Richard will try to take him? Do you think Richard will try to control him?

SECOND CITIZEN:

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Of course he will. That is what men like Richard do. They take control of the young king. They become the power behind the throne. And then they do whatever they want.

THIRD CITIZEN:

This is what always happens when a king dies young. The nobles fight for power. They tear each other apart. And the common people suffer.

FIRST CITIZEN:

We always suffer. That is our lot in life. The rich and powerful do what they want. We just have to live with it.

SECOND CITIZEN:

Maybe it will be different this time. Maybe the young king will be strong. Maybe he will be able to control the nobles.

THIRD CITIZEN:

He is a boy. What does a boy know about controlling nobles? He will be a puppet. He will do whatever the strongest noble tells him to do.

FIRST CITIZEN:

So what do we do? What can we do? We are just ordinary men. We have no power. We have no influence. All we can do is wait and see what happens.

SECOND CITIZEN:

We can pray. That is what we can do. We can pray that God will protect the young king. We can pray that God will guide the kingdom through this difficult time.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Pray? God does not care about us. God does not care about what happens to England. We are on our own. We always have been.

FIRST CITIZEN:

Do not say that. God watches over us. God protects us. Even when things seem dark, God is there.

SECOND CITIZEN:

I hope you are right. I hope God is watching. Because we are going to need all the help we can get.

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THIRD CITIZEN:

Look around you. Look at what is happening. The King is dead. The Queen is in hiding. Richard of Gloucester is preparing to take power. And you think God is watching? If God is watching, why is He letting this happen?

FIRST CITIZEN:

I do not know. I do not understand the ways of God. But I have faith. I believe that everything happens for a reason. I believe that good will come out of this somehow.

SECOND CITIZEN:

You have more faith than I do. I look at the world and I see nothing but trouble. I see nothing but suffering. And I wonder if things will ever get better.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Things will get better when the nobles stop fighting. Things will get better when someone strong takes control. Until then, we just have to survive.

FIRST CITIZEN:

That is the truth. We just have to survive. We have to take care of our families. We have to keep our heads down. And we have to hope that things do not get too bad.

SECOND CITIZEN:

Do you think there will be war? Do you think the nobles will actually fight each other?

THIRD CITIZEN:

There is always war. The nobles are always fighting. That is what they do. They fight for power. They fight for land. They fight for the throne. And we are the ones who suffer.

FIRST CITIZEN:

I remember the last war. I remember the fighting. I remember the chaos. I do not want to go through that again. I do not want my children to go through that.

SECOND CITIZEN:

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None of us want that. But we may not have a choice. If Richard of Gloucester makes his move, there will be war. The Queen's family will fight back. And then there will be bloodshed.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Maybe Richard will be smart. Maybe he will find a way to take power without fighting. Maybe he will convince everyone to support him.

FIRST CITIZEN:

And maybe the sun will rise in the west tomorrow. Richard of Gloucester is not the kind of man who convinces people. He is the kind of man who forces people. He is the kind of man who kills people.

SECOND CITIZEN:

I have heard he can be charming when he wants to be. I have heard he can be very persuasive.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Charming? Persuasive? That is what people say about the devil. The devil can be charming too. The devil can be persuasive. But that does not make him good.

FIRST CITIZEN:

You speak the truth. Richard of Gloucester is a devil. He is a monster. And if he becomes king, God help us all.

SECOND CITIZEN:

We should not speak that way. He is still the King's brother. He is still a prince. We should show respect.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Respect? Why should we respect a man who kills his own brother? Why should we respect a man who would do anything for power?

FIRST CITIZEN:

Because he has power. Because he can hurt us if we speak against him. It is better to keep our mouths shut. It is better to stay quiet.

SECOND CITIZEN:

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That is wise. That is very wise. We should not say anything that could get us in trouble. We should just go about our business and keep our heads down.

THIRD CITIZEN:

That is what everyone says. Keep your head down. Stay quiet. Do not make trouble. And nothing ever changes. Nothing ever gets better.

FIRST CITIZEN:

What do you want us to do? Do you want us to fight? Do you want us to take up arms against Richard of Gloucester? We are ordinary men. We have no weapons. We have no training. We would be killed before we took ten steps.

THIRD CITIZEN:

I do not know what I want. I am just tired. I am tired of being afraid. I am tired of watching the powerful do whatever they want. I am tired of seeing good people suffer while evil men thrive.

SECOND CITIZEN:

We are all tired. But what can we do? We are just men. We have no power. We have no influence. All we can do is pray that God will protect us.

FIRST CITIZEN:

And hope that things do not get too bad. Hope that the young king will be strong. Hope that the nobles will find a way to work together.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Hope. That is all we have. Hope and faith. And sometimes, that does not feel like enough.

SECOND CITIZEN:

It has to be enough. It is all we have. So we hold on to it. We hold on to hope. And we pray that better days are coming.

FIRST CITIZEN:

Better days. I would like to see better days. I would like to see peace. I would like to see prosperity. I would like to see my children grow up in a world that is not filled with fear.

THIRD CITIZEN:

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Maybe we will. Maybe things will work out. Maybe the young king will surprise us. Maybe he will be strong and wise beyond his years.

SECOND CITIZEN:

That is the hope. That is what we have to believe. That the young king will be strong. That he will bring peace. That he will protect us from men like Richard.

FIRST CITIZEN:

Until then, we wait. We watch. And we pray.

THIRD CITIZEN:

We wait. That is all we can do. We wait and see what happens. We wait and see who will come out on top.

SECOND CITIZEN:

Come. We should go. Standing here talking will not change anything. We have work to do. We have families to take care of.

FIRST CITIZEN:

You are right. We should go. There is nothing more to say. What will happen will happen. We cannot stop it.

THIRD CITIZEN:

But we can remember. We can remember what happened. We can remember who was responsible. And one day, maybe, there will be justice.

The three CITIZENS exit in different directions.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

Location: London. The royal palace (or a chamber near sanctuary).

Characters: QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK, LORD RIVERS, and LADY ANNE (briefly).

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Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, and the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK. They are gathered together, looking anxious and fearful. QUEEN ELIZABETH is holding the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK close to her.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Stay calm, Elizabeth. You are frightening the child. He can see the fear in your face.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I cannot help it. Every moment I wait, I imagine the worst. Richard is out there, planning something. I can feel it. I know he is going to try to take my son.

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

Mother, why are you so afraid of Uncle Richard? He has always been kind to me. He gave me a gift last time I saw him. A beautiful dagger.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

A dagger? He gave you a dagger?

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

Yes, Grandmother. It has a gold handle and jewels on it. He said I was old enough to have my own weapon now.

The DUCHESS OF YORK and QUEEN ELIZABETH exchange a worried look.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

A dagger. He gave my son a dagger. What kind of man gives a child a dagger?

DORSET:

It is not unusual for a young prince to have a weapon. It is a symbol of his rank. A gift from his uncle. There is nothing sinister about it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Everything Richard does is sinister. Everything he touches turns to poison.

Enter LORD RIVERS, looking out of breath and anxious.

RIVERS:

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Your Majesty. I have news. Lord Richard and Lord Buckingham have arrived in London. They came with a large company of armed men.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Armed men? I knew it. I knew he would come with force. What does he intend to do? Does he mean to take my son by force?

RIVERS:

He says he has come to welcome the young King. He says he wants to ensure a smooth transition of power. He says he is here to protect the crown.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Protect the crown? Or steal it?

DORSET:

What about the young King? Where is he now? Has he arrived in London?

RIVERS:

He is on his way. Lord Hastings is escorting him. They should arrive within the hour.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Then we need to act quickly. We need to get my son to safety. We need to get him to sanctuary before Richard can reach him.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Sanctuary? You are already in sanctuary. You and the young duke are safe here. The church will protect you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

But my older son is not here. Edward is still outside the city. He is vulnerable. Richard could intercept him. Richard could take him before he reaches safety.

RIVERS:

Lord Hastings is with him. Lord Hastings is loyal. He will protect the young King.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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Lord Hastings? How do we know we can trust him? How do we know Richard has not already turned him to his side?

DORSET:

Hastings has always been loyal to our family. He would never betray us. Not to Richard. Not to anyone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I wish I could be as certain as you are. But I have learned not to trust anyone. Not when Richard is involved.

Enter LADY ANNE, looking worried.

LADY ANNE:

Your Majesty. Forgive me for interrupting. But I thought you should know. Lord Richard is making his way through the city. He is speaking to the people. He is telling them that he has come to protect the young King. He is making himself look like a hero.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Of course he is. That is what he does. He smiles. He charms. He makes everyone believe he is their friend. And then, when they least expect it, he strikes.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Anne, you are Richard's wife. Do you know what he is planning? Has he said anything to you?

LADY ANNE:

He tells me nothing. He keeps everything to himself. I am his wife in name only. He does not trust me. He does not love me. I was a fool to ever believe he could.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

We were all fools. We all believed his lies. We all thought he was something he is not. And now we are paying the price.

YOUNG DUKE OF YORK:

Mother, I am tired. Can I go and rest? I do not understand what everyone is so worried about.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Yes, my child. Go and rest. You do not need to hear all this.

She kisses him on the forehead.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

I will take him. I will put him to bed. You stay here and decide what to do.

The DUCHESS OF YORK takes the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK and exits.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What are we going to do? If Richard takes my son, he will control everything. He will have the power. He will be able to do whatever he wants.

RIVERS:

We have allies. We have supporters. We are not alone. We can fight back.

DORSET:

But can we win? Richard has the army. Richard has the nobles. Richard has been building his power for years. We have been too busy fighting among ourselves to prepare.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

That is my fault. I was so focused on protecting my family, I did not see what Richard was doing. I did not see him gathering power. I did not see him plotting against us.

LADY ANNE:

It is not your fault. He fooled everyone. He fooled me. He fooled the King. He fooled the whole court. No one saw what he really was until it was too late.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What do we do now? Do we stay here and wait? Do we try to reach my son before Richard does?

RIVERS:

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We cannot reach him. He is already on his way. The best we can do is wait and see what happens. If Richard tries anything, we will know. And we will be ready.

DORSET:

But what can we do from here? We are trapped in sanctuary. We cannot leave. We cannot fight. We can only hide.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Then we hide. We stay here. We wait. And we pray that God protects my son.

Enter a MESSENGER, looking frightened.

MESSENGER:

Your Majesty. I have terrible news.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What is it? What has happened?

MESSENGER:

Lord Richard and Lord Buckingham have intercepted the young King. They have taken him from Lord Hastings. They say they are escorting him to London for his own protection.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

No. No. This cannot be happening.

RIVERS:

What about Lord Hastings? What happened to him?

MESSENGER:

Lord Hastings was with the King. But Lord Richard told him his services were no longer needed. He sent him away. He and Lord Buckingham are now in control of the young King.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

They have my son. Richard has my son. God help us. God help us all.

DORSET:

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We need to act. We need to get him back.

RIVERS:

How? How can we get him back? Richard has the army. Richard has the support of the nobles. And now he has the King. There is nothing we can do.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

There must be something. There must be something we can do. I cannot just sit here while my son is in Richard's hands. I cannot just wait for him to be murdered, like Clarence. Like my husband.

LADY ANNE:

Perhaps Richard does not intend to harm him. Perhaps he truly means to protect him. He is the boy's uncle. He is family.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Family? Richard does not know the meaning of family. He killed his own brother. He would kill anyone who stands in his way. And my son stands in his way.

RIVERS:

What do you think he will do? Do you think he will try to take the throne for himself?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Of course he will. That is what he has always wanted. That is why he killed Clarence. That is why he poisoned the King. And that is why he has taken my son. He will find a way to get rid of him. And then he will declare himself king.

DORSET:

But the people will not accept that. They will not accept a usurper. They will not accept a man who murdered his own nephews.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

The people will accept whatever they are told. Richard will spread lies about my son. He will say Edward is illegitimate. He will say he is not fit to be king. And the people will believe him. They always believe the powerful.

LADY ANNE:

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You are talking as if it is already done. As if there is no hope. But there is always hope. There is always a chance.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Hope? What hope is there? My son is in Richard's hands. My other son is here with me, but for how long? Richard will come for him too. He will take him. And then what? What will happen to my children?

RIVERS:

We need to get the young duke out of London. We need to get him somewhere safe. Somewhere Richard cannot find him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Where? Where can we go that Richard cannot find us? He has spies everywhere. He has eyes everywhere. There is nowhere safe.

DORSET:

We could take him to France. We could take him to Burgundy. We could take him anywhere. As long as he is out of Richard's reach.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

And leave my older son behind? Leave Edward to face Richard alone? I cannot do that. I cannot abandon him.

RIVERS:

You are not abandoning him. You are protecting your other son. You are making sure that Richard does not get both of them.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Richard will get him anyway. He will come here. He will take him. There is nothing we can do to stop him.

She begins to weep.

My children. My poor children. What is going to happen to them? What is going to happen to us?

LADY ANNE:

Elizabeth, you must be strong. You must be strong for your children. They need you. They need you to fight for them.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Fight? How can I fight? I am a woman. I have no army. I have no power. All I have is my faith. And even that feels like it is slipping away.

The DUCHESS OF YORK re-enters.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

What is happening? I heard shouting. What has happened?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Richard has taken my son. He has taken Edward. He has control of the King.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

No. No, that cannot be true. Richard would not do that. He would not take the King.

RIVERS:

It is true, Your Grace. The messenger just told us. Richard and Buckingham intercepted the young King on his way to London. They have taken control of him.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

My son. My son has taken his own nephew. What has he become? What has he done?

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

He has become what he always was. A monster. A devil. A man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

I raised him. I gave birth to him. I loved him. And this is what he has become. This is what he has done.

She weeps.

LADY ANNE:

We cannot give up. We cannot let Richard win. We have to fight. We have to find a way to stop him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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There is no way. There is no hope. Richard has won. He has the King. He has the power. And soon, he will have everything.

DORSET:

We should leave. We should take the young duke and flee. We can go to France. We can gather supporters. We can come back and fight when we are stronger.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

No. I will not run. I will not leave my son. I will stay here. I will stay in sanctuary. And I will pray. I will pray that God protects my children. I will pray that God punishes Richard for what he has done.

RIVERS:

Your Majesty, please. We need to think clearly. We need to make a plan.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

There is no plan. There is nothing we can do. Richard has won. It is over.

She sinks down, defeated.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, you must not give up. Your children need you. They need you to be strong.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I have no strength left. I have nothing left. Richard has taken everything from me. My husband. My brother-in-law. And now my son. What more can he take?

LADY ANNE:

He will take more if you let him. He will take your other son. He will take your daughters. He will take everything. Unless you stop him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I cannot stop him. No one can stop him. He is too powerful. He is too clever. He is too evil.

DORSET:

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Then we will stop him. We will fight for you. We will fight for the young King. We will not let Richard take the throne.

RIVERS:

We have supporters. We have allies. We are not alone. We will gather our forces. We will fight back.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You will be killed. Richard will have you killed. Just as he killed Clarence. Just as he killed everyone who stood in his way.

RIVERS:

Then we will die fighting. But we will not give up. We will not let Richard win without a fight.

The DUCHESS OF YORK steps forward.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

I will go to Richard. I will speak to him. I am his mother. He cannot ignore me. I will make him see reason. I will make him release the young King.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

He will not listen. He does not listen to anyone. Not even you.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

I have to try. He is my son. I have to try to reach him. I have to try to save my grandson.

She exits.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

She will fail. Richard will lie to her. He will pretend to listen. And then he will do whatever he wants. He always does.

LADY ANNE:

Elizabeth, you need to rest. You need to save your strength. For your children. For the fight ahead.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

There is no fight. There is only waiting. Waiting for Richard to come. Waiting for him to take everything.

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She looks up, her face filled with grief.

God help us. God help my children. God help England. For Richard is coming. And there is nothing anyone can do to stop him.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Location: London. A street leading to the Tower of London.

Characters: The PRINCE OF WALES (young Edward, now King Edward V), RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, LORD CARDINAL (the Archbishop of Canterbury), LORD HASTINGS, LORD STANLEY (Earl of Derby), the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK (brother of the Prince), and attendants.

Enter the PRINCE OF WALES (young Edward), accompanied by RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, LORD CARDINAL, LORD HASTINGS, and other nobles. The PRINCE is a young boy, dressed in royal robes. He looks around at the city with curiosity and excitement.

PRINCE:

Welcome to London, my lords. I have missed this city. I have missed the towers and the churches and the river. It is good to be home.

He turns to RICHARD.

Uncle Richard, you have been so kind to escort me. I am grateful for your protection.

RICHARD:

It is my duty, Your Majesty. I would do anything to keep you safe. The kingdom needs its king. Especially now, after your father's death.

PRINCE:

I wish my father were still here. I wish he could see me now. He would be proud, I think. He would be proud to see me coming to London to be crowned.

BUCKINGHAM:

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Your father was a great king, Your Majesty. But I am sure he would be even prouder to see the man you will become. You have his strength. You have his intelligence. You will be a great king as well.

PRINCE:

You are kind to say so, Lord Buckingham. But I have much to learn. I am still young. I will need good advisors. Men I can trust.

RICHARD:

You will have the best advisors, Your Majesty. Men who are loyal to you. Men who will guide you wisely.

Enter the YOUNG DUKE OF YORK, accompanied by attendants. He runs to his brother.

YOUNG DUKE:

Edward! Edward! You are here! I have been waiting so long. Mother said you would come. And now you are here.

PRINCE:

Richard! My little brother. How good it is to see you.

They embrace.

YOUNG DUKE:

I have missed you so much. Everything has been so strange since Father died. Everyone is so worried all the time. Mother cries all the time. No one tells me anything.

PRINCE:

I am here now. Everything will be all right. I am the King now. I will take care of everything.

He turns to RICHARD.

Uncle Richard, where is my mother? Why is she not here to greet me?

RICHARD:

Your mother is in sanctuary, Your Majesty. She thought it would be safest for her and your brother to remain there. There has been so much unrest since your father died. She wanted to be protected.

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PRINCE:

Sanctuary? Why would my mother need sanctuary? She is the Queen. She is safe anywhere.

BUCKINGHAM:

Your Majesty, there are those who might wish to harm your mother. There are those who might wish to harm your brother. Your mother thought it best to stay where she would be safe.

PRINCE:

Who would harm my mother? Who would harm my brother? Are there traitors in London? Are there enemies of the crown?

RICHARD:

There are always enemies, Your Majesty. There are always those who want power for themselves. But do not worry. We will protect you. We will protect your family.

PRINCE:

I want to see my mother. I want to see my brother. Can they not leave sanctuary? Can they not come to the palace?

YOUNG DUKE:

Mother says she will not leave. She says it is not safe. She says we must stay where the church can protect us.

PRINCE:

That is foolish. I am the King. I can protect my own family. Uncle Richard, send word to my mother. Tell her she is safe. Tell her she can come out of sanctuary.

RICHARD:

Your Majesty, your mother is… cautious. She does not trust easily. It may take some time to convince her that she is safe.

PRINCE:

Then I will go to her myself. I will tell her that I am the King now. I will tell her that she has nothing to fear.

He moves to leave.

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RICHARD:

Your Majesty, wait. That is not a good idea. Your mother is in sanctuary. It is a holy place. It would not be proper for you to go there. Not before your coronation.

BUCKINGHAM:

Lord Richard is right, Your Majesty. You should focus on your coronation. That is the most important thing right now. Once you are crowned, you can deal with other matters.

PRINCE:

I suppose you are right. I should focus on my coronation. When will it be? I am eager to be crowned. I want to be the King in name as well as in title.

RICHARD:

We are making the arrangements, Your Majesty. It will be very soon. We just need to settle a few things first.

The PRINCE looks at the Tower of London in the distance.

PRINCE:

Is that the Tower? I have heard so much about it. I have always wanted to see it. Can we go there? Can we see the inside?

RICHARD:

The Tower is not a place for a young king, Your Majesty. It is a prison. It is a place where we keep traitors and enemies of the crown.

PRINCE:

I know what the Tower is, Uncle. But it is also a palace. My father stayed there sometimes. My grandfather stayed there. I want to see it. I want to stay there before my coronation. That is what kings do, is it not?

BUCKINGHAM:

Your Majesty, there is a tradition. Kings often stay in the Tower before their coronation. It is a symbol of their power. A symbol of their strength.

RICHARD:

Lord Buckingham, I am not sure that is wise. The Tower is not... comfortable. It is not a place for a young boy.

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PRINCE:

I am not a young boy. I am the King. And I want to stay in the Tower.

He looks at the Tower with determination.

RICHARD:

Very well, Your Majesty. If that is what you want, then that is what you shall have. We will prepare the Tower for you. You and your brother can stay there together.

YOUNG DUKE:

I get to stay in the Tower too? With Edward? That sounds like an adventure!

PRINCE:

Yes, brother. We will stay in the Tower together. Like kings of old. Like the kings in the stories.

He turns to HASTINGS.

Lord Hastings, you have always been loyal to my family. You served my father well. I want you to continue serving me. I want you to be my advisor.

HASTINGS:

Your Majesty, I am honored. I will serve you faithfully. I will do everything in my power to protect you and your crown.

RICHARD:

Lord Hastings is a good man, Your Majesty. He will serve you well.

RICHARD looks at HASTINGS with a cold, calculating gaze.

PRINCE:

Then it is settled. I will stay in the Tower. Lord Hastings will be my advisor. And I will be crowned soon. Everything is going to be all right.

BUCKINGHAM:

Your Majesty, if I may make a suggestion. Your mother is still in sanctuary with your brother. Perhaps we should bring your brother to stay with you in the Tower. That way, you can be together. That way, you can both be protected.

PRINCE:

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That is a wonderful idea. Richard, would you like to stay with me in the Tower? We can play games. We can talk about old times. We can be together like we used to be.

YOUNG DUKE:

Yes! Yes, I would love that! Can I, Uncle Richard? Can I stay with Edward in the Tower?

RICHARD:

Of course you can. I will make the arrangements. I will send word to your mother. I am sure she will agree.

PRINCE:

Then it is settled. Come, Richard. Let us go to the Tower. Let us see where we will stay.

The PRINCE takes his brother's hand and starts to walk toward the Tower. RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM follow behind, speaking quietly to each other.

RICHARD: (to BUCKINGHAM, quietly)

So. The young king wants to stay in the Tower. That is convenient. Very convenient.

BUCKINGHAM:

Very convenient indeed. And his brother will be joining him. Both of them together. In the Tower.

RICHARD:

Where they will be safe. Where they will be protected. Where no one can reach them.

BUCKINGHAM:

And where no one can use them against us.

RICHARD:

Exactly. Now we need to deal with the others. The Queen's family. Lord Rivers. Lord Grey. They are still out there. They are still a threat.

BUCKINGHAM:

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They are on their way to London. They do not know what has happened. They do not know that we have the King.

RICHARD:

Then we need to act quickly. Before they can gather support. Before they can turn the people against us.

BUCKINGHAM:

What do you want me to do?

RICHARD:

Arrest them. All of them. Rivers. Grey. Vaughan. Anyone who is loyal to the Queen. Take them to Pomfret Castle. Hold them there.

BUCKINGHAM:

And if they resist?

RICHARD:

Then they die. But do it quietly. We do not want a scene. We do not want the people to know what we are doing.

BUCKINGHAM:

It will be done. What about Lord Hastings? He is loyal to the young King. He could be a problem.

RICHARD:

Lord Hastings? I will deal with him myself. He trusts me. He thinks I am his friend. He will not see what is coming until it is too late.

The PRINCE turns back to look at them.

PRINCE:

Uncle Richard! Are you coming? We want to see the Tower!

RICHARD:

I am coming, Your Majesty. I am right behind you.

He smiles his charming smile.

PRINCE:

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Good. I am excited. I have always wanted to see the inside of the Tower. My father told me stories about it. About the kings who stayed there. About the history.

RICHARD:

The Tower has a long history, Your Majesty. Many kings have stayed there. Many kings have... never left.

PRINCE:

What do you mean, never left? Where would they go? They are kings. They can go anywhere they want.

RICHARD:

Of course, Your Majesty. I did not mean anything by it. Come. Let me show you the Tower.

They walk toward the Tower. RICHARD walks behind the two young princes, watching them. His face is cold and calculating.

BUCKINGHAM: (to RICHARD, quietly)

They are just boys. Innocent boys. They do not know what is happening. They do not know what you are planning.

RICHARD:

That is what makes it so easy. They trust me. They love me. I am their uncle. Their loving, devoted uncle.

He watches the princes walk ahead.

Soon, they will be out of the way. And then nothing will stand between me and the throne.

BUCKINGHAM:

And the people? What will they say when they find out?

RICHARD:

The people will say what I tell them to say. They will believe what I tell them to believe. I will spread rumors about the princes. I will say they are illegitimate. I will say they have no right to the throne. And the people will believe me.

BUCKINGHAM:

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And if they do not believe you?

RICHARD:

Then they will be dealt with. Just like everyone else who stands in my way.

He smiles again, a cold, cruel smile.

Come. We must not keep the young king waiting. He wants to see his new home. His new prison.

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM follow the princes toward the Tower. The scene ends.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

Location: London. Lord Hastings' house.

Characters: LORD HASTINGS, a MESSENGER, LORD STANLEY (Earl of Derby), SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE, and others.

Enter LORD HASTINGS, looking troubled. He paces back and forth in his chamber, deep in thought. A MESSENGER enters.

HASTINGS:

What news? Have you heard anything?

MESSENGER:

My lord, I have just come from Lord Stanley. He sends word that he had a strange dream last night. A disturbing dream.

HASTINGS:

A dream? What kind of dream?

MESSENGER:

He dreamed that a boar attacked him. A wild boar with sharp tusks. It gored him and tore him apart. He is very shaken by it.

HASTINGS:

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A boar? That is strange. But it is only a dream. Dreams do not mean anything. Why does he trouble me with such things?

MESSENGER:

He says the dream has left him uneasy, my lord. He says he does not feel safe. He wants to know if you will go with him to the Tower. He does not want to go alone.

HASTINGS:

Go to the Tower? I am going to the Tower myself this morning. There is a council meeting. Richard and Buckingham will be there. We are supposed to discuss the coronation.

MESSENGER:

Lord Stanley says he will not go. He says he feels something is wrong. He wants to stay away. He wants you to stay away too.

HASTINGS:

Stay away? From a council meeting? That would be foolish. Richard has called the meeting himself. If I do not go, he will think I am suspicious. He will think I am plotting against him.

MESSENGER:

Lord Stanley says you should pretend to be sick. He says you should send word that you cannot attend.

HASTINGS:

I will do no such thing. Richard and I are friends. We have worked together for years. He trusts me. I trust him. There is nothing to fear.

Enter LORD STANLEY.

STANLEY:

Hastings! I came myself. I had to see you. I had to warn you.

HASTINGS:

Stanley, you look terrible. What is wrong with you?

STANLEY:

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I told you. The dream. The boar. I cannot shake it. It felt so real. So terrifying.

HASTINGS:

It was a dream. Nothing more. You are letting your imagination get the better of you.

STANLEY:

You do not understand. I have never had a dream like that before. It felt like a warning. Like something trying to tell me to be careful.

HASTINGS:

A warning? From whom? God? Do you think God sends messages through dreams?

STANLEY:

I do not know. But I am afraid. I am afraid of what might happen today.

HASTINGS:

What could possibly happen? We are going to a council meeting. We are going to discuss the coronation. Richard wants the young king crowned as soon as possible. That is what we all want.

STANLEY:

Do we all want that? Does Richard want that?

HASTINGS:

What do you mean? Of course Richard wants that. He has said so himself.

STANLEY:

Richard says many things. That does not mean he means them.

HASTINGS:

You are being paranoid. Richard is loyal to the crown. He has always been loyal to the crown.

STANLEY:

Is that why he killed Clarence? Is that why he took control of the young king? Is that why he arrested Rivers and Grey?

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HASTINGS:

He arrested Rivers and Grey because they were a threat. They were trying to take power for themselves. They were trying to control the young king.

STANLEY:

That is what Richard says. But is it true? Or is that just what Richard wants us to believe?

HASTINGS:

I do not know what to believe anymore. But I know Richard. I have known him for years. He is not a monster. He is not a villain.

STANLEY:

Are you sure? Are you really sure?

HASTINGS:

I am sure enough. I am going to the council meeting. You should come with me. It will be fine. You will see.

STANLEY:

I cannot. I will not. I am going to stay away. I am going to pretend to be sick. You should do the same.

HASTINGS:

I will not hide. I will not run. I am loyal to the young king. I will do my duty.

STANLEY:

Then you are a fool. A brave fool, but a fool nonetheless.

HASTINGS:

Perhaps. But I would rather be a fool than a coward.

STANLEY:

It is not cowardice to be careful. It is not cowardice to protect yourself.

HASTINGS:

It is cowardice to let fear control you. It is cowardice to hide when you should be standing up for what is right.

STANLEY:

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I hope you are right. I hope I am wrong. But I have a terrible feeling about today. A terrible feeling that something bad is going to happen.

HASTINGS:

Nothing is going to happen. We will go to the council meeting. We will discuss the coronation. And then we will go home. It will be an ordinary day.

STANLEY:

There are no ordinary days anymore. Not since Edward died. Not since Richard started making his moves.

HASTINGS:

You worry too much. You have always worried too much. Go home. Rest. Forget about your dream. I will see you tomorrow.

STANLEY:

I hope I do see you tomorrow. I hope I am wrong about all of this.

He turns to leave but stops.

Hastings. One more thing. Have you heard what people are saying? About the young king? About his brother?

HASTINGS:

What are people saying?

STANLEY:

There are rumors. Rumors that the princes are illegitimate. That Edward's marriage to Elizabeth was not valid. That the children should not be king.

HASTINGS:

That is nonsense. Edward and Elizabeth were married. Everyone knows that. The children are legitimate.

STANLEY:

It does not matter what is true. It matters what people believe. And if Richard spreads these rumors, people will start to believe them.

HASTINGS:

Richard would not do that. He would not spread lies about his own nephews.

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STANLEY:

Would he not? He spread lies about Clarence. He spread lies about Rivers and Grey. Why would he not spread lies about the princes?

HASTINGS:

Because they are children. They are innocent. They are his own flesh and blood.

STANLEY:

Clarence was his own flesh and blood. And he is dead.

HASTINGS is silent for a moment.

HASTINGS:

Go home, Stanley. Rest. You are not yourself today.

STANLEY:

I am more myself than I have ever been. I see things clearly now. I see what Richard is. I see what he is capable of. I only hope you see it too. Before it is too late.

STANLEY exits.

HASTINGS: (to himself)

Stanley is a good man. But he lets his fears control him. He lets his imagination run wild. There is nothing to fear from Richard. Richard is my friend. He has always been my friend.

He pauses, thinking.

Or is he? What if Stanley is right? What if Richard is planning something? What if I am the fool?

He shakes his head.

No. No, I am being paranoid now too. Richard called this meeting to discuss the coronation. That is all. There is no conspiracy. There is no plot.

Enter SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE.

RATCLIFFE:

My lord, Lord Richard sends word. The council meeting is about to begin. He asks that you come to the Tower at once.

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HASTINGS:

I am on my way. Tell Lord Richard I will be there shortly.

RATCLIFFE:

I will, my lord. He also wanted me to tell you that the council will be discussing the coronation. He wants to make sure that everything is in order. He wants the young king crowned as soon as possible.

HASTINGS:

That is what I want as well. The sooner the king is crowned, the sooner the kingdom can be at peace.

RATCLIFFE:

Lord Richard agrees. He says there is no time to waste. The kingdom needs a king. The people need to see their new ruler.

HASTINGS:

I will come immediately. Tell Lord Richard I will be there.

RATCLIFFE:

I will, my lord.

RATCLIFFE exits.

HASTINGS: (to himself)

There. You see? There is nothing to worry about. Richard wants the coronation. He wants the young king on the throne. Everything is fine.

He picks up his cloak and prepares to leave.

Stanley is a fool. A good man, but a fool. He sees danger everywhere. He sees threats in every shadow. But there are no threats. There is no danger. Today will be an ordinary day. A day of business. A day of planning. And then I will come home. And everything will be the same as it always was.

He starts to exit but stops.

And yet... that dream. The boar. Why would Stanley dream of a boar? And why would it trouble him so much?

He shakes his head.

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It is nothing. It is just a dream. Dreams do not mean anything. I will go to the Tower. I will attend the council. And I will prove that there is nothing to fear.

He exits.

That is the complete Act 3, Scene 2 in modern English. Would you like me to continue with **Act 3, Scene 3**?

yeah

Here is **Act 3, Scene 3** of *Richard III* in modern English, continuing directly from the previous scene.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

Location: Pomfret Castle.

Characters: LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY, SIR THOMAS VAUGHAN, and SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE, with GUARDS.

Enter LORD RIVERS, LORD GREY, and SIR THOMAS VAUGHAN. They are in chains, guarded by armed men. They are being led to their execution. SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE walks with them, holding a warrant.

RIVERS:

Sir Richard Ratcliffe, I must ask you one more time. On what authority are we being executed? Who gave the order? Who signed the warrant?

RATCLIFFE:

My lord, you know the answer to that question. The Duke of Gloucester has signed the warrant. He has declared you all traitors to the crown.

GREY:

Traitors? We are no traitors. We have served the King faithfully. We have served the crown faithfully. We have done nothing wrong.

RATCLIFFE:

That is not for me to decide, my lord. I am simply carrying out my orders.

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VAUGHAN:

This is murder. Plain and simple murder. Richard knows we are innocent. He knows we have committed no crime. He is killing us because we stand in his way.

RATCLIFFE:

Sir Thomas, I would advise you to hold your tongue. It will not help you to speak such words.

VAUGHAN:

What does it matter? I am going to die. Whether I speak or stay silent, I am going to die. So let me speak the truth. Richard is a murderer. He killed Clarence. He killed King Edward. And now he is killing us. And soon he will kill the young princes as well.

RATCLIFFE:

That is enough. I will not hear such treasonous words.

RIVERS:

Treason? The only treason here is Richard's. He has seized power that does not belong to him. He has imprisoned the rightful king. He has murdered innocent men. And now he will answer for it. If not in this life, then in the next.

GREY:

We are not afraid to die. We die with clear consciences. We die knowing we have done nothing wrong. But Richard will die with blood on his hands. He will die knowing what he has done. And that is a fate worse than death.

RATCLIFFE:

You may say what you will. It does not matter. The sentence has been passed. You are all going to die. There is nothing you can say that will change that.

RIVERS turns to GREY and VAUGHAN.

RIVERS:

Brother Grey. Sir Thomas. We have known each other for many years. We have served together. We have fought together. And now we will die together.

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GREY:

It is an honor to die with you, Lord Rivers. If I must die, I am glad to have you by my side.

VAUGHAN:

And I as well. We have been friends for a long time. It is fitting that we should face death together.

RIVERS:

We have served the crown faithfully. We have served the young king faithfully. That is something to be proud of. Whatever Richard says, whatever lies he spreads, the truth will come out one day.

GREY:

Do you think the young king will be safe? Do you think Richard will spare him?

RIVERS:

I do not know. I hope so. I pray so. But I fear the worst. Richard will stop at nothing to get what he wants. And what he wants is the throne.

VAUGHAN:

Then our deaths are for nothing. If Richard takes the throne anyway, if he kills the princes anyway, then we died for nothing.

RIVERS:

Our deaths are not for nothing. We die for what is right. We die for the truth. That is not nothing. That is everything.

He turns to RATCLIFFE.

Sir Richard. I have one request. Before we die, let us pray. Let us say our final prayers. Surely you can grant us that.

RATCLIFFE:

You may pray. But make it quick. We do not have much time.

RIVERS:

Thank you. That is all we ask.

RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN kneel.

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RIVERS:

Almighty God, we come before you in our final hour. We ask that you forgive us our sins. We ask that you receive our souls into your kingdom.

GREY:

We die innocent of any crime. We die loyal to the true king. We ask that you protect him. We ask that you protect his brother. Keep them safe from those who wish them harm.

VAUGHAN:

And we ask that you punish those who have wronged us. Not out of vengeance, but out of justice. Let the truth be known. Let the guilty be brought to account.

RIVERS:

Lord, we commit our spirits into your hands. We trust in your mercy. We trust in your love. Receive us, we pray, into your eternal kingdom. Amen.

GREY and VAUGHAN:

Amen.

They rise.

RATCLIFFE:

Are you finished?

RIVERS:

We are finished. We are ready.

RATCLIFFE nods to the GUARDS. They step forward with axes.

GREY:

Lord Rivers. Sir Thomas. It has been an honor.

RIVERS:

And for me as well. Goodbye, my friends. We will meet again. In a better place. In a better world.

VAUGHAN:

Goodbye. May God have mercy on our souls.

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The GUARDS position them for execution.

RATCLIFFE:

Do you have any last words?

RIVERS:

Only this. Tell Richard that we forgive him. Tell him that we pray for his soul. He may think he is winning. He may think he is becoming powerful. But he is losing something far more important. He is losing his soul. And no crown is worth that.

GREY:

And tell him that the truth will come out. One day, everyone will know what he has done. One day, he will have to answer for his crimes.

VAUGHAN:

And tell him that the young king is watching. The young king sees everything. And one day, when he is old enough, he will have justice.

RATCLIFFE:

I will tell him. Now, if you are ready.

RIVERS:

We are ready. Do what you must.

The GUARDS raise their axes. RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN kneel.

RIVERS:

God save the King. The true king. Edward V.

GREY:

God save the King.

VAUGHAN:

God save the King.

The axes fall. RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN die.

RATCLIFFE: (to the GUARDS)

It is done. Clean up this mess. I must go to London. I must tell Lord Richard that his orders have been carried out.

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He looks at the bodies for a moment.

Three innocent men. Dead because Richard wanted them out of the way. And this is only the beginning. There will be more. Many more. Richard will not stop until he has everything. Until everyone who stands in his way is dead.

He exits. The GUARDS remove the bodies.

That is the complete Act 3, Scene 3 in modern English. Would you like me to continue with **Act 3, Scene 4**?

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yeah

Here is **Act 3, Scene 4** of *Richard III* in modern English, continuing directly from the previous scene.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

Location: London. The Tower of London. A council chamber.

Characters: RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, LORD HASTINGS, LORD STANLEY (Earl of Derby), the BISHOP OF ELY, LORD LOVELL, and other LORDS. Also present: a SCRIVENER (briefly), and attendants.

Enter RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, HASTINGS, STANLEY, the BISHOP OF ELY, LORD LOVELL, and other LORDS. They take their places around a council table. RICHARD sits at the head, looking calm and confident. BUCKINGHAM sits beside him.

RICHARD:

My lords, thank you for coming. I know these are difficult times. The kingdom is in mourning. We have lost our beloved King Edward. But we cannot let grief stop us from doing our duty. We must move forward. We must crown the young king as soon as possible.

BUCKINGHAM:

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Lord Richard is right. The kingdom needs a king. The people need to see their new ruler. Every day we wait, there is more uncertainty. More fear. More unrest.

HASTINGS:

I agree completely. The young king should be crowned without delay. He is a fine young man. Intelligent. Strong. He will make a good king. With good advisors to guide him.

RICHARD:

Good advisors. Yes. That is what he will need. Men he can trust. Men who are loyal to him. Men who have the kingdom's best interests at heart.

He looks around the table.

Which brings me to something I must discuss with you. There have been rumors. Rumors about the young king. About his brother. About their legitimacy.

HASTINGS:

Legitimacy? What are you talking about? The princes are legitimate. Edward and Elizabeth were married. Everyone knows that.

RICHARD:

Were they? I am not so sure. I have heard things. Things that trouble me.

STANLEY:

What things? What have you heard?

RICHARD:

I have heard that Edward was already betrothed to another woman before he married Elizabeth. I have heard that he promised himself to Lady Eleanor Butler. If that is true, then his marriage to Elizabeth was not valid. And if the marriage was not valid, then the children are bastards. They have no right to the throne.

HASTINGS:

That is nonsense. There is no proof of any such betrothal. It is just a rumor. A lie spread by those who want to harm the young king.

RICHARD:

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Is it a lie? I am not so certain. I have seen documents. I have spoken to people who knew about this. It troubles me deeply. I love my nephews. I do not want to believe anything bad about them. But the truth is the truth. And if the truth is that they are not legitimate, then we cannot crown them. It would be wrong. It would be against God's law.

BUCKINGHAM:

Lord Richard makes a good point. We cannot ignore the truth just because it is uncomfortable. If the princes are illegitimate, then they cannot be king. It is that simple.

HASTINGS:

This is madness. You are trying to steal the throne from a child. You are spreading lies to justify your own ambition.

RICHARD:

Ambition? Is that what you think? I have no ambition. I only want what is right. I only want what is best for England.

HASTINGS:

You want the throne. That is what you want. You have always wanted it. You killed Clarence to get it. You killed Edward to get it. And now you want to kill the princes to get it.

RICHARD:

That is enough. I will not sit here and listen to these accusations. I have done nothing wrong. I have served my brother faithfully. I have served the crown faithfully. And I will not have my honor questioned by a man like you.

HASTINGS:

Your honor? You have no honor. You are a murderer. A liar. A traitor. And everyone in this room knows it.

RICHARD slams his fist on the table.

RICHARD:

How dare you! How dare you speak to me that way! I am the Duke of Gloucester. I am the brother of the dead king. I am the uncle of the young prince. And you, Lord Hastings, are nothing. You are a traitor. A conspirator. A man who has been plotting against me for years.

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HASTINGS:

That is a lie. I have never plotted against anyone. I have been loyal to the crown. Loyal to Edward. Loyal to his children. That is more than you can say.

RICHARD:

Loyal? You call yourself loyal? Then why did you conspire with the Queen? Why did you try to keep me from the young king? Why did you try to keep me from my rightful place?

HASTINGS:

I did nothing of the sort. I was protecting the young king. Protecting him from you.

RICHARD:

From me? You think I would hurt my own nephew? You think I would harm a child? You are the one who wants to harm him. You and the Queen. You want to control him. You want to use him for your own purposes.

BUCKINGHAM:

My lords, please. This arguing is getting us nowhere. Perhaps we should adjourn for today. Give everyone time to calm down.

RICHARD:

No. We will not adjourn. We will settle this now. Lord Hastings, you have been accused of treason. What do you say in your defense?

HASTINGS:

Treason? I am no traitor. I have done nothing wrong.

RICHARD:

Then why did you send word to the Queen? Why did you warn her that I was coming? Why did you try to keep the young king from me?

HASTINGS:

I did not send any word. I did not warn anyone. You are making this up. You are inventing lies to justify what you are about to do.

RICHARD:

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I am not inventing anything. I have proof. I have witnesses. I have everything I need to prove that you are a traitor.

He stands up and points at HASTINGS.

You, Lord Hastings, are a traitor. You have conspired against me. You have conspired against the crown. And for that, you must die.

HASTINGS:

Die? You cannot kill me. I am a peer of the realm. I have the right to a trial. I have the right to defend myself.

RICHARD:

You have no rights. You are a traitor. Traitors have no rights. Guards! Take him away!

GUARDS enter and seize HASTINGS.

HASTINGS:

No! This is murder! You cannot do this! I am innocent! I have done nothing!

RICHARD:

Take him out. Execute him immediately. Do not let him speak another word.

HASTINGS:

Richard! You will pay for this! God will punish you for what you have done! You are a murderer! A devil! A—

The GUARDS drag HASTINGS out. His voice fades as they take him away.

RICHARD: (to the other lords)

My lords, I am sorry you had to see that. But it was necessary. Lord Hastings was a traitor. He has been plotting against me for months. Against the crown. Against the young king.

STANLEY:

Lord Richard, are you sure? Lord Hastings has always been loyal. I have known him for years. He would never—

RICHARD:

Are you questioning my judgment, Lord Stanley? Are you suggesting that I would execute an innocent man?

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STANLEY:

No, my lord. Of course not. I just... I am surprised. That is all.

RICHARD:

Surprise is understandable. Treason often comes from unexpected places. But now that Hastings is dealt with, we can focus on more important matters. The coronation.

BUCKINGHAM:

My lord, there is still the question of the princes' legitimacy. We cannot crown them if they are not legitimate.

RICHARD:

You are right, Buckingham. We must get to the bottom of this. We must find out the truth. And if the truth is that the princes are illegitimate, then we must find someone else to be king.

STANLEY:

Someone else? Who else is there? The princes are the heirs. If they are not legitimate, then the throne passes to... to you, Lord Richard. You are the next in line.

RICHARD:

Me? No. I could not. I would not want to be king. I am not ambitious. I only want what is best for England.

BUCKINGHAM:

But Lord Richard, if the princes are illegitimate, you are the rightful king. It is your duty to take the throne. For the good of the kingdom.

RICHARD:

I... I do not know. It is a heavy burden. A terrible responsibility. I am not sure I am worthy.

BUCKINGHAM:

You are the most worthy man in England. You are strong. You are wise. You are loyal. The kingdom needs you. The people need you.

RICHARD:

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You flatter me, Buckingham. I am not as good as you say.

BUCKINGHAM:

I speak only the truth. Everyone here knows it. You are the only man who can lead England through these troubled times.

The other lords murmur in agreement.

RICHARD:

If that is what you all think... if that is what is best for England... then I will do my duty. I will take the throne. But only if it is truly God's will. Only if the princes are truly illegitimate.

BUCKINGHAM:

We will find out the truth. We will investigate. And when the truth comes out, everyone will see that you are the rightful king.

RICHARD:

Very well. I trust your judgment, Buckingham. I trust all of you. Let us find out the truth. Let us do what is right for England.

He rises from his seat.

Now, if you will excuse me, I need some time alone. This has been a difficult day. A difficult day for all of us.

He starts to leave but stops.

One more thing. Lord Hastings. His wife. His children. They are not to be harmed. He was a traitor, but they are innocent. See that they are treated well.

BUCKINGHAM:

Of course, my lord. I will see to it personally.

RICHARD:

Thank you, Buckingham. You are a good man. A loyal friend. I am fortunate to have you by my side.

RICHARD exits. The lords sit in silence for a moment.

STANLEY:

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What just happened? Lord Hastings is dead. Executed without a trial. And now Richard is talking about taking the throne.

BISHOP OF ELY:

It was all planned. The accusations. The execution. It was all planned. Richard has been plotting this for months.

LOVELL:

But what can we do? He has the power. He has the army. He has Buckingham. If we speak against him, we will be next.

STANLEY:

Then we stay silent. We do what he says. We pretend to support him. And we hope that one day, someone will stop him.

BUCKINGHAM:

My lords, I suggest you all go home. Rest. Think about what has happened today. And tomorrow, we will continue our work. We will find out the truth about the princes. And we will do what is right for England.

He exits. The other lords look at each other, frightened and uncertain.

STANLEY:

God help us. God help England. For Richard is now in control. And there is nothing any of us can do to stop him.

They exit.

That is the complete Act 3, Scene 4 in modern English. Would you like me to continue with **Act 3, Scene 5**?

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yeah

Here is **Act 3, Scene 5** of *Richard III* in modern English, continuing directly from the previous scene.

ACT 3, SCENE 5

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Location: London. The Tower of London. A corridor or chamber near the council room.

Characters: RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE, LOVEL, and GUARDS.

Enter RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM. They are alone for a moment. RICHARD looks pleased with himself. BUCKINGHAM stands beside him, equally satisfied.

RICHARD:

Well, Buckingham. That went better than I expected. Hastings is dead. The council is frightened. No one will dare speak against us now.

BUCKINGHAM:

It went perfectly. Hastings never saw it coming. He thought you were his friend. He trusted you. Right up until the moment the guards took him.

RICHARD:

Trust. That is what fools do. They trust. And then they die. Hastings was a fool. A loyal fool, but a fool nonetheless.

BUCKINGHAM:

His loyalty was to the young king. To Edward's children. He would never have supported you. He had to be removed.

RICHARD:

He had to be removed. Yes. And now he is. One less obstacle. One less voice speaking against me.

Enter SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE and LOVEL. They look hurried and excited.

RATCLIFFE:

My lords, it is done. Lord Hastings has been executed. His head has been struck off. The people in the courtyard saw everything.

RICHARD:

Good. Good. How did they react? The people. What did they say?

RATCLIFFE:

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They were shocked, my lord. They did not understand what was happening. Some of them cried out. Some of them ran away.

RICHARD:

Shocked? That is good. Shock is useful. It makes people afraid. And when people are afraid, they do what they are told.

BUCKINGHAM:

But we need more than fear, Richard. We need their support. We need them to believe that Hastings was a traitor. That his execution was justice. Not murder.

RICHARD:

You are right. We need to control the story. We need to make sure that everyone knows what a villain Hastings was. What a traitor.

He turns to RATCLIFFE.

Ratcliffe, I want you to spread the word. Tell everyone that Hastings was plotting against me. Tell them he was plotting against the crown. Tell them he was going to kill me and take the throne for himself.

RATCLIFFE:

Yes, my lord. I will make sure everyone hears.

RICHARD:

And tell them that I discovered the plot just in time. That I had no choice but to execute him. That it was my duty. My solemn duty to protect the kingdom.

RATCLIFFE:

It will be done, my lord.

RATCLIFFE exits.

BUCKINGHAM:

That will help. But we need more. We need something to turn the people against the Queen. Against her family. Against the princes.

RICHARD:

What do you suggest?

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BUCKINGHAM:

I have been thinking about that. The rumors about the princes' illegitimacy. We need to make those rumors stronger. We need to make everyone believe them.

RICHARD:

Go on.

BUCKINGHAM:

There is a man. A doctor. He was a bishop. He knows about Edward's betrothal to Lady Eleanor Butler. He can testify that the marriage was valid. That Edward was already married when he married Elizabeth.

RICHARD:

Can he be trusted? Will he say what we want him to say?

BUCKINGHAM:

He can be persuaded. He wants a position in the church. A high position. We can give him what he wants. In exchange for his testimony.

RICHARD:

Do it. Arrange it. Make sure he says exactly what we need him to say.

BUCKINGHAM:

It will be done. And once people believe that Edward's marriage was invalid, the princes will be seen as bastards. They will have no claim to the throne.

RICHARD:

And then the throne will be mine. By right. By law. Not by force. Not by murder. By right.

BUCKINGHAM:

Exactly. The people will accept you. The nobles will accept you. You will be king. And no one will be able to say that you stole the throne.

RICHARD:

No one except the princes. No one except the Queen. No one except those who know the truth.

BUCKINGHAM:

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The princes are in the Tower. They are under our control. No one can get to them. No one can speak to them.

RICHARD:

And the Queen? She is in sanctuary. She has the Duke of York with her. She could still cause trouble. She could still rally support.

BUCKINGHAM:

She is a woman. She has no army. No power. No one will follow her. Especially once we spread the rumors about her children.

RICHARD:

I want the Duke of York. I want him brought to the Tower. To join his brother.

BUCKINGHAM:

He is in sanctuary. The church protects him. We cannot take him by force. It would cause outrage.

RICHARD:

Then we find a way. We convince the Archbishop that it is for the best. We tell him that the young duke needs to be with his brother. That they need each other. That it is safer for them to be together.

BUCKINGHAM:

The Archbishop is a good man. He wants what is best for the princes. He might agree.

RICHARD:

Then go to him. Speak to him. Convince him. Tell him that the princes are safer in the Tower. That we can protect them there. That sanctuary is not safe. Not with all the unrest in the city.

BUCKINGHAM:

I will go to him today. I will convince him. I will bring the young duke to the Tower.

RICHARD:

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Good. Once both princes are in the Tower, we will have complete control. No one will be able to use them against us. No one will be able to claim that they are the true kings.

BUCKINGHAM:

And what then? What do we do with them? Once they are in the Tower. Once they are under our control.

RICHARD:

We wait. We let the rumors spread. We let the people believe that they are illegitimate. And then, when the time is right, we declare that I am the rightful king.

BUCKINGHAM:

And the princes? What happens to them?

RICHARD looks at BUCKINGHAM. His expression is cold.

RICHARD:

What do you think happens to them? They are in the Tower. They are a threat. As long as they live, there will always be someone who sees them as the true kings. Someone who will try to put them on the throne.

BUCKINGHAM:

You want them dead.

RICHARD:

I want them out of the way. I want no one standing between me and the throne. If that means they die, then they die.

BUCKINGHAM:

They are children. Innocent children. They are your own nephews.

RICHARD:

They are obstacles. Nothing more. And obstacles must be removed.

BUCKINGHAM is silent for a moment.

BUCKINGHAM:

I... I did not think it would come to this. I thought we could just... set them aside. Declare them illegitimate. Send them away somewhere.

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RICHARD:

Send them away? And let them grow up? Let them gather supporters? Let them one day come back and take the throne from me? No. That is not how this works. They must be dealt with. Permanently.

BUCKINGHAM:

I am not sure I can be part of that. I am not sure I can be part of killing children.

RICHARD:

You are already part of it. You helped me kill Hastings. You helped me arrest Rivers and Grey. You helped me take control of the young king. You are in this as deep as I am.

BUCKINGHAM:

That was different. They were men. They were enemies. They were threats. The princes are just children.

RICHARD:

They are threats. The biggest threats of all. As long as they live, my crown is not secure. As long as they live, there will be those who want to put them on the throne. They must die. And you will help me. Or you will share their fate.

BUCKINGHAM looks at RICHARD. He sees the cold determination in his eyes.

BUCKINGHAM:

I understand. I will do what must be done.

RICHARD:

Good. I knew I could count on you, Buckingham. You are a true friend. A loyal friend.

He puts his hand on BUCKINGHAM's shoulder.

Now. We have work to do. Go to the Archbishop. Get the young duke. Bring him to the Tower. I will deal with the rest.

BUCKINGHAM:

And the princes? When will it be done?

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RICHARD:

When the time is right. When the people have accepted me as king. When no one will ask too many questions. Then we will deal with them.

BUCKINGHAM:

And who will do it? Who will carry out the deed?

RICHARD:

I have someone in mind. Someone who will do what needs to be done. Without questions. Without hesitation.

BUCKINGHAM:

Who?

RICHARD:

His name is Tyrrell. Sir James Tyrrell. He is a loyal man. A ruthless man. He will do whatever I ask.

BUCKINGHAM:

And the people? What will they think when they find out the princes are dead?

RICHARD:

They will not find out. The princes will simply disappear. No one will know what happened to them. There will be rumors, of course. There will always be rumors. But no one will know for certain. And without proof, no one can do anything.

BUCKINGHAM:

It is a risky plan. If anyone finds out...

RICHARD:

No one will find out. You will not speak of it. I will not speak of it. Tyrrell will not speak of it. It will be our secret. A secret we take to our graves.

He smiles.

Now go. We have wasted enough time. There is much to do. The throne is within reach. I can almost feel the crown on my head.

BUCKINGHAM:

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I will go to the Archbishop now. I will bring the young duke to the Tower.

He turns to leave but stops.

Richard. One more thing. What about the others? The nobles who supported Hastings? The ones who might speak against you?

RICHARD:

They will be watched. They will be frightened by what happened to Hastings. They will keep their mouths shut. If they do not, they will share his fate.

BUCKINGHAM:

And the common people? The citizens of London?

RICHARD:

They are sheep. They follow whoever has the power. When I am king, they will follow me. They will love me. Or they will fear me. Either way, they will obey.

BUCKINGHAM nods and exits.

RICHARD stands alone for a moment. He looks out toward the city.

RICHARD:

Soon. Soon it will all be mine. The crown. The kingdom. Everything I have ever wanted. Everything I have ever worked for.

He smiles, a cold, cruel smile.

And no one can stop me. No one. The princes will die. The Queen will be powerless. The nobles will bow to me. And I will be king. Richard III. King of England.

He laughs quietly to himself.

Let them hate me. Let them fear me. It does not matter. I will have the throne. And that is all that matters.

He exits.

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ACT 3, SCENE 6

Location: London. A street near the Tower.

Characters: A SCRIVENER (a professional writer or scribe), speaking alone.

Enter a SCRIVENER, carrying a paper. He looks confused and troubled.

SCRIVENER:

This is the document. The one they are posting all over the city. The one that explains why Lord Hastings was executed. It says he was a traitor. It says he was plotting against the Duke of Gloucester. It says he deserved to die.

He reads from the paper.

"Lord Hastings was executed for high treason. He conspired with the Queen and her family to seize power. He planned to murder the Duke of Gloucester and take the throne for himself."

He shakes his head.

I copied this document myself. I was called in late last night. I was told to write it quickly. To make many copies. To have them ready by morning.

He looks at the paper again.

But here is what I do not understand. I wrote this document at eleven o'clock last night. But Lord Hastings was executed before ten. How can I be writing about his treason after he is already dead? How can I be writing about his plot after he has already been executed?

He folds the paper.

There is something wrong here. Something very wrong. The document says there was a trial. There was an investigation. But I know the truth. There was no trial. There was no investigation. There was only an execution. And then, after the man was dead, they wrote down the reasons.

He looks around, making sure no one is listening.

This is how it works now. This is how Richard does things. First he kills a man. Then he finds a reason. First he takes what he wants. Then he makes it look legal.

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He shakes his head sadly.

I am just a scrivener. I write what I am told to write. I do not question. I do not argue. I do my job. But I know the truth. And someday, everyone will know the truth. What happened to Lord Hastings was not justice. It was murder. Plain and simple murder.

He exits, carrying the papers.

ACT 3, SCENE 7

Location: London. The courtyard of Baynard's Castle (Richard's residence).

Characters: RICHARD (Duke of Gloucester), the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, the LORD MAYOR of London, LORD LOVELL, SIR RICHARD RATCLIFFE, ALDERMEN, CITIZENS, and other LORDS and ATTENDANTS.

Enter RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM from different directions. They meet in the courtyard. RICHARD is dressed as a monk or a holy man, standing between two clergymen. He looks humble and pious. BUCKINGHAM is dressed in fine clothes, looking excited and confident.

BUCKINGHAM:

Richard! There you are. The Lord Mayor is coming. The aldermen are coming. The citizens are coming. Everyone is coming to hear what you have to say.

RICHARD:

Keep your voice down, Buckingham. I am supposed to be praying. I am supposed to be in contemplation. I am a humble man. A religious man. I have no interest in politics. No interest in power.

He smiles slyly.

That is what they are supposed to believe.

BUCKINGHAM:

You look the part. Two clergymen beside you. Your hands clasped in prayer. Your eyes looking toward heaven. They will believe anything.

RICHARD:

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That is the plan. They want a king? They want a ruler? Let them ask me. Let them beg me. Let them plead with me to take the throne. And I will resist. I will refuse. I will tell them I am not worthy. And then, finally, I will give in. I will accept the crown. Not because I want it. But because it is my duty. Because God calls me to serve.

BUCKINGHAM:

It is perfect. They will see you as a saint. A martyr. A man who takes the throne only because he must. Not because he wants it.

RICHARD:

And once I am king, they will never know the truth. They will never know what I did to get here. They will see only what I want them to see.

Enter the LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, and CITIZENS. They are led by LOVELL and RATCLIFFE. BUCKINGHAM goes to greet them.

BUCKINGHAM:

My Lord Mayor. Welcome. Thank you for coming. The Duke of Gloucester is inside. He is praying. He has been praying all morning. He is a holy man. A humble man. He has no idea why you are here.

LORD MAYOR:

Lord Buckingham, we have come to speak with the Duke. We have heard the rumors. We have heard that the young princes are illegitimate. That they cannot be king. That the throne belongs to the Duke of Gloucester.

BUCKINGHAM:

I have heard those rumors as well. And I believe them to be true. Edward's marriage was not valid. The children are bastards. They have no claim to the throne.

LORD MAYOR:

Then the Duke of Gloucester is the rightful king. He is the next in line. He must take the throne.

BUCKINGHAM:

I agree. But the Duke is a humble man. He does not seek power. He does not want the throne. He wants only to serve God and to live in peace.

LORD MAYOR:

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But it is his duty. His duty to the kingdom. His duty to the people. He must take the throne. We must convince him.

BUCKINGHAM:

Then let us go to him. Let us speak to him. Let us tell him what we believe. Perhaps he will listen. Perhaps he will accept his duty.

They move toward where RICHARD is standing. RICHARD pretends not to see them. He continues praying.

LORD MAYOR:

Your Grace. Forgive us for interrupting your prayers. But we must speak with you. There is important business. Business that concerns the whole kingdom.

RICHARD: (pretending to be surprised)

My Lord Mayor? What are you doing here? I was just praying. I was asking God to guide me. To show me the way.

BUCKINGHAM:

Richard, these men have come to speak with you about the crown. They have heard the rumors about the princes. They believe the princes are illegitimate. They believe you are the rightful king.

RICHARD:

The rightful king? No. No, that cannot be. I am not worthy of such a title. I am a humble man. A simple man. I have no desire to be king.

BUCKINGHAM:

But it is your duty, Richard. The princes are illegitimate. Everyone knows it. Edward's marriage was not valid. The children have no right to the throne.

RICHARD:

I have heard those rumors. But I do not know if they are true. I do not want to believe anything bad about my brother. I loved Edward. I loved his children. I cannot believe they are bastards.

LORD MAYOR:

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Your Grace, it is not about what you believe. It is about the truth. The truth is that Edward was already married when he married Elizabeth. The truth is that the children are illegitimate. The truth is that you are the rightful king.

RICHARD:

But I am not worthy. I am a sinner. I have done terrible things. I have made mistakes. I cannot be king.

BUCKINGHAM:

We have all made mistakes, Richard. But you are the best man for the throne. You are strong. You are wise. You are just. The kingdom needs you.

RICHARD:

You flatter me, Buckingham. I am not as good as you say.

BUCKINGHAM:

I speak only the truth. Everyone here knows it. You are the only man who can lead England. The only man who can keep the kingdom strong.

The CITIZENS murmur in agreement.

LORD MAYOR:

Your Grace, we beg you. Take the throne. Do it for England. Do it for the people. We need you. We need a strong king. A wise king. A just king.

RICHARD:

I... I do not know. It is a heavy burden. A terrible responsibility. I am not sure I am worthy.

BUCKINGHAM:

You are worthy. More worthy than anyone. Please, Richard. Say yes. Take the throne. Be our king.

RICHARD pretends to struggle with the decision. He looks at the ground. He looks up at the sky. He clasps his hands in prayer.

RICHARD:

If this is truly God's will... if the people truly want me... then I will do my duty. I will take the throne. Not because I want it. But because it is what is best for England.

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The CITIZENS cheer.

LORD MAYOR:

God bless you, Your Grace. God bless the King.

BUCKINGHAM:

Long live the King! Long live King Richard!

Everyone cheers. RICHARD stands among them, looking humble and grateful. But his eyes betray his true feelings. He is pleased. He is triumphant. He has what he wanted.

RICHARD: (to himself, quietly)

It is mine. Finally, it is mine. The crown. The throne. Everything. No one can stop me now.

He raises his hands to the crowd, pretending to bless them.

Thank you, my friends. Thank you for your faith in me. I will not let you down. I will be a good king. A strong king. A king worthy of England.

The crowd cheers again. BUCKINGHAM steps forward.

BUCKINGHAM:

Tomorrow, we will go to Westminster. Tomorrow, you will be crowned. And England will have a king again. A true king. A rightful king.

RICHARD:

Tomorrow. Yes. Tomorrow I will be crowned. And then the work begins. The work of building a strong England. A united England. An England that no one can tear apart.

He looks out at the crowd, but his mind is elsewhere. He is thinking about the princes. About the threats that still remain. About what must still be done.

RICHARD: (to himself)

The crown is mine. But it is not safe. Not yet. Not as long as the princes live. They are in the Tower. They are waiting. They are hoping. And as long as they breathe, someone will try to put them on the throne.

He smiles at the crowd, hiding his thoughts.

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But that problem will be dealt with. Soon. Very soon. And then no one will stand between me and the throne. No one.

BUCKINGHAM: (to RICHARD)

Richard? Are you all right? You seem distracted.

RICHARD:

I am fine, Buckingham. I was just thinking. Thinking about the future. Thinking about England. About what we must do to keep it strong.

BUCKINGHAM:

And what is that? What must we do?

RICHARD:

We must be vigilant. We must be strong. We must not let anyone threaten the peace we have built.

He looks at BUCKINGHAM with meaning.

There are still threats. Still enemies. Still those who would take the crown from me. They must be dealt with. Quickly. Quietly. Permanently.

BUCKINGHAM:

I understand. I will see to it.

RICHARD:

Good. I knew I could count on you, Buckingham. You are a true friend. A loyal friend.

He puts his hand on BUCKINGHAM's shoulder.

Now. Let us go to Westminster. Let us prepare for the coronation. Tomorrow, I will be king. And nothing will ever be the same again.

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM exit, followed by the LORD MAYOR, the ALDERMEN, and the CITIZENS. The crowd continues to cheer.

RICHARD: (to himself, as he exits)

The crown is mine. The throne is mine. And woe to anyone who tries to take it from me.

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END OF ACT 3

ACT 4, SCENE 1

Location: London. Before the Tower of London.

Characters: QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, LADY ANNE (now Queen Anne, Richard's wife), and LADY MARGARET PLANTAGENET (Clarence's daughter).

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, and the MARQUESS OF DORSET. They are walking toward the Tower. They look anxious and fearful.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, are you sure about this? Are you sure you want to go to the Tower? Richard will not be pleased. He has made it clear that no one is to visit the princes.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I do not care what Richard wants. They are my sons. I have not seen them since Richard took them. I need to see them. I need to know they are safe.

DORSET:

Mother, I understand. But Richard is dangerous. If he finds out you have gone against his orders...

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Let him find out. What can he do? He has already taken everything from me. My husband. My brother. My sons. What more can he take?

Enter LADY ANNE, walking alone. She looks sad and worn.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Anne. Look at you. You look terrible. Has Richard not been treating you well?

LADY ANNE:

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Treating me well? He does not treat me at all. He ignores me. He avoids me. I am his wife in name only. He married me to get what he wanted. And now that he has it, he has no use for me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You are lucky. At least he ignores you. At least he leaves you alone. My children are in that tower. And there is nothing I can do to save them.

LADY ANNE:

I am sorry, Elizabeth. I am sorry for everything. I was a fool to marry him. I was a fool to believe his lies.

Enter LADY MARGARET PLANTAGENET, the young daughter of Clarence. She is with her attendants.

LADY MARGARET:

Grandmother. Mother. What are you all doing here? Are you going to see the princes?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Yes, child. We are going to try to see them. Though I do not know if they will let us in.

LADY MARGARET:

I want to see them too. I want to see my cousins. I have not seen them since they were taken.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You stay here, child. It is not safe. Richard's guards are everywhere. They will not let you in. They will not let any of us in.

She looks at the Tower gates.

They have my sons in there. My beautiful boys. And I cannot reach them. I cannot protect them.

DORSET:

Mother, perhaps we should go back. This is not helping. Standing here, waiting. It is only making things worse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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Go back? Go back where? To sanctuary? To hide while Richard does whatever he wants? No. I will not go back. I will stand here until they let me see my sons.

Enter LORD STANLEY, looking troubled.

STANLEY:

Your Majesty. Your Grace. I have news. News that will trouble you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

What news? What has happened now?

STANLEY:

Richard has been crowned king. He was crowned at Westminster this morning. He is now King Richard III.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

No. No, that cannot be. He cannot be king. My son is the king. Edward is the king.

STANLEY:

Richard has declared the princes illegitimate. He says Edward's marriage was not valid. He says the children have no right to the throne.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

And the people? What do the people say? Do they accept this?

STANLEY:

Some do. Some are afraid to speak against him. Lord Hastings was executed for speaking against him. No one wants to share his fate.

LADY ANNE:

He is king. He actually did it. He took the throne. Just as he always planned.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

And my sons? What will happen to my sons? Now that he is king, he has no use for them. He will...

She stops, unable to say the words.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

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Elizabeth, do not think the worst. Richard is a monster, but he is not... he would not...

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

He would. He killed Clarence. He killed Hastings. He killed my brothers. He will kill my sons. It is only a matter of time.

LADY MARGARET:

Grandmother, what does she mean? What will happen to the princes?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Nothing, child. Nothing will happen to them. They are safe. They are in the Tower. They are protected.

She says this, but her face shows she does not believe it.

LADY ANNE:

I wish I had never married him. I wish I had never met him. I wish I had died before I ever laid eyes on him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

We all wish that. But wishes do not change anything. We must act. We must do something to save my sons.

DORSET:

What can we do? Richard has the army. He has the nobles. He has the crown. We have nothing.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Then we find allies. We find someone who can help us. Someone who can fight Richard.

STANLEY:

There is someone. The Earl of Richmond. Henry Tudor. He is in France. He has a claim to the throne. If we could get him to invade...

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Richmond? Yes. Yes, that could work. He is descended from John of Gaunt. He has a claim. If he could raise an army...

DUCHESS OF YORK:

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Elizabeth, you are talking about treason. You are talking about bringing a foreign army to England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I am talking about saving my sons. If that means bringing Richmond to England, then so be it.

DORSET:

Mother, it is dangerous. If Richard finds out...

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Let him find out. What more can he do to me? He has already taken everything. I have nothing left to lose.

She turns to STANLEY.

Lord Stanley, you have connections. You have influence. Can you reach Richmond? Can you tell him that he has supporters in England? That we will help him?

STANLEY:

I can try, Your Majesty. But it will take time. And we must be careful. Richard has spies everywhere.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Be careful. But be quick. Every day we wait, my sons are in more danger.

She looks at the Tower one last time.

I cannot save them. I cannot reach them. But I can avenge them. I can make sure that Richard pays for what he has done.

LADY ANNE:

I will help. I am his wife. I know his secrets. I know his plans. I can help you fight him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You would betray your own husband?

LADY ANNE:

He is not my husband. He is a monster. He used me. He manipulated me. And now he ignores me. I owe him nothing.

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DUCHESS OF YORK:

And what about me? What about my son? Richard is my son. But he has become something terrible. Something I do not recognize. I will help you too. For the sake of my grandchildren. For the sake of England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Then we are agreed. We will fight Richard. We will bring him down. And we will save my sons.

She looks at the Tower again.

Or we will avenge them.

They exit together, united in their purpose.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

Location: London. The royal palace.

Characters: KING RICHARD III, the DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, SIR JAMES TYRRELL, a PAGE, and LORDS.

Enter RICHARD, now crowned and dressed as king. He looks confident but restless. BUCKINGHAM enters with him. RICHARD is pacing.

RICHARD:

So. I am king. Finally. After all these years. After all the plotting and scheming and killing. I am king.

BUCKINGHAM:

You are king, Richard. And you are a good king. Strong. Decisive. The people will come to respect you.

RICHARD:

The people. Yes. The people. They cheer for me now. But they would cheer for anyone. They cheered for Edward. They will cheer for the princes if they had the chance.

BUCKINGHAM:

The princes are in the Tower. They are not going anywhere.

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RICHARD:

They are in the Tower. Yes. But they are still alive. Still breathing. Still a threat.

BUCKINGHAM:

Richard, you cannot mean…

RICHARD:

I mean exactly what you think I mean. The princes must die. As long as they live, there will be those who see them as the true kings. Those who will try to put them on the throne.

BUCKINGHAM:

They are children. Your own nephews.

RICHARD:

They are obstacles. Nothing more. And obstacles must be removed. I thought we already discussed this.

BUCKINGHAM:

I know. But I did not think you meant… I did not think you would do it so soon.

RICHARD:

Soon? How long do you want me to wait? Until they are grown? Until they have armies of their own? Until they come for my crown?

BUCKINGHAM:

No. Of course not. But there must be another way. We could send them away. To France. To Burgundy. Somewhere far away where they cannot cause trouble.

RICHARD:

Send them away? And let them grow up plotting against me? Let them return with foreign armies? No. I will not make that mistake. They must die. And you will help me.

BUCKINGHAM:

I… I cannot. I cannot be part of killing children.

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RICHARD:

You are already part of it. You helped me get the crown. You helped me eliminate everyone who stood in my way. You are in this as deep as I am.

BUCKINGHAM:

I know. But this is different. This is murdering innocent children.

RICHARD:

Hastings was innocent. Rivers was innocent. Grey was innocent. You did not complain about them.

BUCKINGHAM:

They were men. They were enemies. The princes are just boys.

RICHARD:

Boys who will grow up to be men. Men who will want my crown. Men who will have supporters. Men who will come for me. Unless I stop them now.

BUCKINGHAM is silent for a long moment.

BUCKINGHAM:

I cannot do it, Richard. I cannot be part of this. Find someone else.

RICHARD:

Find someone else? You are my right hand. My closest ally. And you are telling me you will not help me?

BUCKINGHAM:

I am telling you I cannot kill children. That is not who I am. That is not what I signed up for.

RICHARD:

Then you are of no use to me. If you will not help me, then you are just another obstacle. Another threat.

BUCKINGHAM:

Richard, do not say that. I am still your friend. I am still loyal. I just cannot do this one thing.

RICHARD:

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Loyal? You refuse to help me and you call yourself loyal? Get out of my sight. I do not want to look at you.

BUCKINGHAM:

Richard, please...

RICHARD:

Get out! Now!

BUCKINGHAM exits, looking hurt and angry. RICHARD stands alone for a moment, fuming.

RICHARD:

Buckingham. My closest friend. My most trusted ally. And now he refuses me. He turns his back on me when I need him most.

He paces.

No matter. I do not need him. I never needed him. I used him. Just as I used everyone. And now that he is no longer useful, I will discard him. Just as I discarded everyone else.

He calls out.

Page! Send for Sir James Tyrrell.

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE:

Yes, Your Majesty. I will find him at once.

The PAGE exits. RICHARD continues pacing.

Tyrrell. Now there is a man I can trust. A man who does what he is told. No questions. No hesitation. He will do what needs to be done.

Enter SIR JAMES TYRRELL. He is a hard-looking man, cold and efficient.

TYRRELL:

Your Majesty. You sent for me.

RICHARD:

Yes, Tyrrell. I have a task for you. A task that requires discretion. And ruthlessness.

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TYRRELL:

I am at your service, Your Majesty. Whatever you need.

RICHARD:

The princes. In the Tower. They are still alive.

TYRRELL:

I understand, Your Majesty.

RICHARD:

Do you? Do you understand what I am asking?

TYRRELL:

You want them dead, Your Majesty. It is a simple task. I can have it done tonight.

RICHARD:

Tonight? You can do it tonight?

TYRRELL:

I have men. Trustworthy men. Men who will do what needs to be done and never speak of it again.

RICHARD:

Good. Good. That is what I wanted to hear. Not like Buckingham. He refused me. He turned his back on me.

TYRRELL:

Buckingham is weak, Your Majesty. He has a conscience. Consciences are dangerous things. They get in the way.

RICHARD:

Yes. Yes, they do. That is why I am giving this task to you. You have no conscience. That is your greatest strength.

TYRRELL:

I do what needs to be done, Your Majesty. I do not ask questions. I do not make judgments. I simply serve.

RICHARD:

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Then serve me now. Go to the Tower. Kill the princes. Make sure no one knows. Make sure no one ever finds out.

TYRRELL:

It will be done, Your Majesty. By morning, the princes will be gone. Forever.

RICHARD:

Good. Go. Do not fail me.

TYRRELL:

I never fail, Your Majesty.

TYRRELL exits. RICHARD stands alone, looking satisfied.

RICHARD:

Finally. Finally, it will be done. The princes will die. And no one will ever know. No one will ever be able to prove that I was responsible.

He sits on his throne, looking pleased.

The crown is mine. Truly mine. No one can take it from me now. The princes are dead. Buckingham is out of the way. The Queen is powerless. I have everything I ever wanted.

He laughs quietly.

Let them hate me. Let them fear me. I am the king. And no one can stop me.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER:

Your Majesty, I have news. Bad news.

RICHARD:

What is it? What has happened?

MESSENGER:

The Duke of Buckingham has fled London. He is raising an army in Wales. He means to march against you.

RICHARD:

Buckingham? Buckingham is raising an army against me? After everything I did for him? After everything I gave him?

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MESSENGER:

Yes, Your Majesty. He has declared that you are a usurper. He says you have no right to the throne. He says the princes...

RICHARD:

The princes? What does he say about the princes?

MESSENGER:

He says they are still alive. He says you have no right to the throne while they live.

RICHARD:

Buckingham. I gave him everything. I trusted him. And now he betrays me.

He stands up, furious.

I will crush him. I will crush him and everyone who follows him. No one betrays me. No one.

He calls out.

Ratcliffe! Lovell! Gather the army. We march against Buckingham. And when I catch him, he will wish he had never been born.

He exits, filled with rage.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

Location: London. The Tower of London. Later.

Characters: SIR JAMES TYRRELL, two MURDERERS, and RICHARD (later).

Enter TYRRELL. He is alone for a moment, looking at the Tower.

TYRRELL:

It is done. The princes are dead. My men went to their chamber. They smothered them with pillows. They did not suffer. At least, not for long.

He pauses, remembering.

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They were sleeping when we came. The young king and his brother. They looked so peaceful. So innocent. They did not know what was happening. They did not have time to be afraid.

He shakes his head.

I do not know why I am thinking about this. I have done worse things. Many worse things. But these were children. Innocent children. And I killed them.

He straightens up.

No. I did what I was told. I served my king. That is all. I do not think about it. I do not feel anything. That is how I survive.

Enter the two MURDERERS.

FIRST MURDERER:

It is done, Sir James. The princes are dead. We saw them fall asleep. And then we made sure they would never wake up.

SECOND MURDERER:

No one saw us. No one heard anything. It was quiet. Clean. No one will ever know.

TYRRELL:

Good. You have done well. The king will be pleased.

FIRST MURDERER:

What about the guards? The servants? They will notice the princes are gone.

TYRRELL:

That is not your concern. I will deal with that. You have done your part. Now go. Disappear. Do not tell anyone what you have done. If you do, the king will find you. And you know what happens to people who betray the king.

SECOND MURDERER:

We will not say anything, Sir James. We know how to keep our mouths shut.

TYRRELL:

Good. Then go. You will be paid. Generously. The king takes care of those who serve him.

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The MURDERERS exit. TYRRELL stands alone for a moment.

TYRRELL:

The princes are dead. The king will be happy. He will reward me. He will give me lands and titles. Everything I ever wanted.

He looks back at the Tower.

But I will never forget. I will never forget the look on their faces. The way they slept. So peaceful. So innocent. And I killed them.

He exits, troubled despite himself.

Later. Enter RICHARD. He is impatient and anxious.

RICHARD:

Where is Tyrrell? He said it would be done by morning. It is almost noon. Where is he?

He paces.

If he has failed me, I will kill him. I will kill him slowly. I will make him wish he had never been born.

Enter TYRRELL.

Tyrrell! Finally. Is it done? Are the princes dead?

TYRRELL:

It is done, Your Majesty. The princes are dead. They were killed last night. They died peacefully. They did not suffer.

RICHARD:

Good. Good. That is what I wanted to hear.

He smiles, but then his expression changes.

You are sure? You are sure they are dead? There is no mistake?

TYRRELL:

I am sure, Your Majesty. I saw the bodies myself. They are dead. Buried. No one will ever find them.

RICHARD:

Buried? Where?

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TYRRELL:

In a secret place, Your Majesty. Somewhere no one will ever look. Somewhere no one will ever find them.

RICHARD:

Good. Good. That is... that is good.

He seems relieved, but also disturbed. He paces.

The princes are dead. They cannot threaten me now. The crown is mine. Truly mine.

TYRRELL:

Yes, Your Majesty.

RICHARD:

You have done well, Tyrrell. You will be rewarded. Lands. Titles. Whatever you want.

TYRRELL:

I serve only you, Your Majesty. I need no reward.

RICHARD:

You will have a reward. I am the king. I can give you anything. And I will.

He pauses.

Now leave me. I need to think. I need to... I need to be alone.

TYRRELL:

Yes, Your Majesty.

TYRRELL exits. RICHARD stands alone in the chamber. He looks at his hands.

RICHARD:

The princes are dead. They cannot hurt me. They cannot take my crown. I am safe. I am finally safe.

He laughs, but it is a hollow laugh.

But why do I feel this way? Why do I feel... nothing? I have what I wanted. The crown. The throne. Everything. So why do I feel so empty?

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He sits on his throne, but he does not look happy. He looks haunted.

The princes are dead. My own nephews. Children. Innocent children. And I killed them.

He stands up suddenly.

No. I did not kill them. Tyrrell killed them. I did not lift a finger. I did not even see them die. I am not responsible. I am the king. I am above such things.

He tries to convince himself, but it does not work.

But I ordered it. I gave the command. Their blood is on my hands. Just like Clarence's blood. Just like Hastings' blood. Just like Rivers' and Grey's and Vaughan's blood. So much blood. So many deaths. All for this crown.

He looks at the crown on his head.

Was it worth it? Was any of it worth it?

He shakes his head.

Yes. Yes, it was worth it. I am the king. The most powerful man in England. No one can tell me what to do. No one can stand against me. I am Richard III. King of England.

He says the words, but there is no joy in them. He sits on his throne, alone and haunted.

ACT 4, SCENE 4

Location: London. Before the royal palace.

Characters: QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, LORD STANLEY, the MARQUESS OF DORSET, and RICHARD (later).

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH and the DUCHESS OF YORK. They are in mourning, dressed in black. They are weeping.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

They are dead. My sons are dead. I knew it. I felt it. The moment they were taken, I knew they would never come back.

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DUCHESS OF YORK:

Elizabeth, we do not know for certain. There are rumors, yes. But rumors are not proof. They could still be alive.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

They are dead. I know it. Every mother knows when her children die. I felt it. A pain in my heart. A darkness in my soul. They are gone.

She weeps.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

My grandsons. My beautiful grandsons. Richard has killed them. Just as he killed Clarence. Just as he killed everyone who stood in his way.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

He is a monster. A devil. There is no evil too great for him. No crime too terrible. He will stop at nothing. And now my sons are dead.

Enter LORD STANLEY.

STANLEY:

Your Majesty. Your Grace. I have news. The rumors are true. The princes are dead. Richard killed them. There is no doubt.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I knew it. I knew it all along. My sons. My beautiful sons. Gone.

She collapses, weeping.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

How do you know? How can you be sure?

STANLEY:

There are witnesses. Men who were in the Tower that night. They saw what happened. They know the truth. Richard had them killed. Smothered in their beds. While they slept.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

My grandsons. Smothered in their beds. Like animals. Like they meant nothing.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH:

They meant nothing to him. Nothing at all. They were just obstacles. Things to be removed. He never saw them as children. As human beings. As my sons.

Enter the MARQUESS OF DORSET.

DORSET:

Mother. Grandmother. I have come to take you away. It is not safe here. Richard may come. He may try to harm you too.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Let him come. What more can he do to me? He has taken everything. My husband. My brothers. My sons. There is nothing left.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

He has taken my sons. Two of them are dead. The third is a monster. A devil. I have no sons left. Only a monster who wears my son's face.

STANLEY:

You must leave. Both of you. Go to France. Go to Richmond. He is gathering an army. He will defeat Richard. He will bring justice.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Richmond. Yes. He is our only hope. He will avenge my sons. He will kill Richard. He will give England back its honor.

DORSET:

Come, Mother. We must go. The ship is waiting. We will be safe in France.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

I will go. But I will not forget. I will never forget what Richard did. And one day, he will pay. One day, justice will come.

Enter RICHARD. He is dressed as king, with guards.

RICHARD:

Ah. The grieving mother. The grieving grandmother. All dressed in black. All weeping for the dead. How touching.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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You. You dare show your face to me? You murderer. You monster. You killed my sons.

RICHARD:

I did not kill your sons. They are alive. In the Tower. Safe and sound.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

Do not lie to me. Everyone knows what you did. You killed them. Smothered them in their beds. While they slept.

RICHARD:

Those are lies. Rumors spread by my enemies. The princes are alive. I would never harm them. They are my nephews. My own flesh and blood.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Your flesh and blood? You killed your own brother. You would kill anyone. You have no heart. No soul. You are a monster.

RICHARD:

Mother. How can you say that? I am your son. Your own flesh and blood. Do you not love me?

DUCHESS OF YORK:

Love you? I gave birth to you. I raised you. I loved you. And you have become this. This thing. This monster. I do not know you. I do not want to know you. You are not my son. You are something else. Something evil.

RICHARD:

You wound me, Mother. After everything I have done for you. After everything I have given you.

DUCHESS OF YORK:

You have given me nothing but pain. Nothing but grief. You killed my son Clarence. You killed my grandsons. You have turned my family into a graveyard. And you expect me to love you? You expect me to be grateful?

RICHARD:

I did not kill anyone. Those are lies. Lies spread by my enemies.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

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Lies? You stand there, wearing the crown you stole, sitting on the throne you murdered for, and you call the truth lies? You are a liar. A murderer. A usurper. And one day, you will fall. One day, justice will find you.

RICHARD:

Justice? I am justice. I am the king. What I say is law. What I do is right. There is no justice above me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

There is God. God is above you. And God sees everything. He sees what you have done. And He will punish you. In this life or the next.

RICHARD:

God? God has abandoned England. God has abandoned you. I am the king. And there is nothing anyone can do about it.

STANLEY:

There is Richmond. He is coming. He has an army. And he will take the throne from you. Just as you took it from the princes.

RICHARD:

Richmond? A nobody. A bastard. He cannot touch me. I am Richard of Gloucester. I am the king. I will crush him like an insect.

DORSET:

You will try. But you will fail. Richmond has the support of France. He has the support of the nobles. He has the support of everyone who hates you. And there are many who hate you, Richard. Many who want to see you fall.

RICHARD:

Let them come. I will kill them all. I will kill anyone who stands against me. I am the king. No one can stop me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH:

You are nothing. A monster. A murderer. And you will die alone. Unloved. Unmourned. Forgotten. That is your fate, Richard. That is your punishment.

She turns to leave.

Come. We have wasted enough time on this creature. Let him enjoy his crown while he can. It will not be long before it is taken from him.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS OF YORK, DORSET, and STANLEY exit. RICHARD stands alone, furious.

RICHARD:

Let them go. Let them run to Richmond. It does not matter. I will crush them all. I will crush Richmond. I will crush everyone who stands against me. I am the king. I am Richard III. And I will not fall.

He exits, but his confidence is shaken.

ACT 4, SCENE 5

Location: London. Lord Stanley's house.

Characters: LORD STANLEY and SIR CHRISTOPHER URSWICK (a priest and agent of Richmond).

Enter STANLEY and SIR CHRISTOPHER URSWICK. They speak quietly, looking around to make sure no one is listening.

STANLEY:

Sir Christopher. You came from Richmond? What news? How goes the campaign?

URSWICK:

Richmond is in France. He is gathering an army. The French king supports him. He will have ships. Soldiers. Everything he needs to invade England.

STANLEY:

And the English nobles? Who supports him?

URSWICK:

Many. Many who are tired of Richard's tyranny. Many who have lost family to his cruelty. They are ready to rise up. They are waiting for Richmond to arrive.

STANLEY:

Good. That is good. When will he come?

URSWICK:

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Soon. Within weeks. He wants to strike before Richard can gather his forces. He wants to catch Richard off guard.

STANLEY:

And my stepson? The young Duke of Buckingham? He raised an army against Richard. What happened to him?

URSWICK:

Buckingham was captured. Richard executed him. He is dead.

STANLEY:

Dead. Another victim. Richard kills everyone who stands against him.

URSWICK:

But Richmond is different. Richmond has a chance. He has the support of France. He has the support of the nobles. He has the support of the people. They are tired of Richard. They want a new king. A good king.

STANLEY:

And what does Richmond need from me?

URSWICK:

He needs you to prepare the way. To gather support in England. To be ready to rise up when he lands. He needs you to be his eyes and ears. To tell him what Richard is doing. To help him plan his attack.

STANLEY:

I will do it. I will help Richmond. Richard is a monster. He killed my stepson. He killed the princes. He killed everyone I loved. I will see him fall.

URSWICK:

Good. Richmond will be grateful. When he is king, you will be rewarded.

STANLEY:

I do not want reward. I want justice. I want Richard to pay for what he has done.

URSWICK:

He will. Richmond will see to that. He is a good man. A just man. He will be a good king.

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STANLEY:

I hope so. God knows England needs one.

He looks out the window.

Now go. Before Richard's spies find you. Tell Richmond that I am with him. Tell him that England is waiting. Waiting for him to come and save us.

URSWICK:

I will. God be with you, Lord Stanley.

URSWICK exits. STANLEY stands alone.

STANLEY:

Richmond. You are our only hope. Do not fail us. Do not fail England.

He exits.

END OF ACT 4

ACT 5, SCENE 1

Location: Salisbury. An open area.

Characters: The DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, GUARDS, and SHERIFF.

Enter BUCKINGHAM in chains, led by GUARDS and the SHERIFF. He looks worn and defeated.

BUCKINGHAM:

So. This is how it ends. Not with a battle. Not with glory. But in chains. Waiting to die.

He looks around.

I raised an army against Richard. I thought I could beat him. I thought the people would rise up with me. But they were afraid. They were all afraid. And Richard crushed me like an insect.

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SHERIFF:

My lord, do you have any last words? Anything you wish to say before the execution?

BUCKINGHAM:

Last words? What words can I say? I am a traitor. A failed rebel. I tried to overthrow the king. And now I will die for it.

He pauses.

But I am not the traitor. Richard is the traitor. He stole the throne. He murdered the princes. He killed everyone who stood in his way. I am not the villain. He is.

SHERIFF:

My lord, I would advise you to be careful. Such words could make your death more painful.

BUCKINGHAM:

What does it matter? I am going to die anyway. Let me speak the truth. Let me say what I have wanted to say for so long.

He raises his voice.

Richard is a murderer! He killed King Henry! He killed Prince Edward! He killed his own brother Clarence! He killed Lord Hastings! He killed Lord Rivers! He killed Lord Grey! He killed Sir Thomas Vaughan! He killed the young princes! And he will kill anyone who stands in his way!

SHERIFF:

My lord! Please!

BUCKINGHAM:

Let them hear! Let everyone hear! Richard is a usurper! A tyrant! A monster! And one day, he will fall! One day, justice will come!

He calms down slightly.

But I will not see it. I will be dead. Killed by the same man I helped put on the throne. I was a fool. I thought Richard was my friend. I thought we would rule together. But Richard has no friends. Richard has no loyalty. Richard has nothing but ambition.

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SHERIFF:

My lord, it is time. The executioner is waiting.

BUCKINGHAM:

Very well. I am ready. Let them do what they must.

He turns to the GUARDS.

Tell Richard something for me. Tell him that I forgive him. Tell him that I pray for his soul. He will need those prayers. When he stands before God, he will need all the prayers he can get.

He walks toward the execution.

I am coming, Richard. I will be waiting for you. In the next life. Where you will answer for everything you have done.

He exits with the GUARDS. The SHERIFF follows.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

Location: A plain near Tamworth.

Characters: The EARL OF RICHMOND (Henry Tudor), LORD OXFORD, SIR JAMES BLUNT, SIR WALTER HERBERT, and other SUPPORTERS, with SOLDIERS.

Enter RICHMOND, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and other SUPPORTERS. They are marching with their army. They look confident and hopeful.

RICHMOND:

My lords, we are almost there. We are almost at Bosworth Field. Richard is waiting for us. He has his army. He has his supporters. But we have something he does not have.

OXFORD:

What is that, my lord?

RICHMOND:

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We have justice. We have truth. We have right on our side. Richard is a tyrant. A usurper. A murderer. The people do not want him. The nobles do not want him. God does not want him.

BLUNT:

He has a larger army, my lord. He has more men. More experience. More weapons.

RICHMOND:

Size does not matter. What matters is the cause. Richard fights for himself. For his own power. For his own greed. We fight for England. For the people. For the future.

HERBERT:

The men are ready, my lord. They believe in you. They will fight for you. They will die for you if they must.

RICHMOND:

I hope it does not come to that. I hope we can win without too much bloodshed. But if we must fight, we will fight. And we will win.

He looks at his army.

Look at them. Ordinary men. Farmers. Craftsmen. Soldiers. They are not fighting for glory. They are fighting for their families. For their homes. For their children. That is why we will win. Because we have something worth fighting for.

OXFORD:

Richard's men are fighting for him because they are afraid. Because they have no choice. That is not the same as fighting for something you believe in.

RICHMOND:

Exactly. When the battle begins, Richard's men will falter. They will question why they are fighting. They will wonder if it is worth dying for a tyrant. And when they falter, we will strike.

BLUNT:

What about Lord Stanley? He said he would support us. But he has not committed his forces yet.

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RICHMOND:

Stanley is waiting. He wants to see which way the wind blows. He will not commit until he knows who is going to win. That is the way of men like Stanley. They wait. They watch. And then they join the winning side.

HERBERT:

Can we trust him?

RICHMOND:

We can trust him to do what is in his best interest. And when he sees that we are winning, he will join us. That is enough.

He turns to his commanders.

Now, my lords, we must prepare. Tomorrow we fight. Tomorrow we decide the fate of England. Let us make sure that when the sun sets tomorrow, England is free. Free from tyranny. Free from Richard. Free to become what it was meant to be.

OXFORD:

We are with you, my lord. To the end.

RICHMOND:

Then let us march. Let us meet Richard on Bosworth Field. And let us show him that the people of England will not bow to a tyrant. That they will fight for their freedom. That they will win.

They exit, marching toward Bosworth.

ACT 5, SCENE 3

Location: Bosworth Field. The camps of Richard and Richmond.

Characters: KING RICHARD III, the DUKE OF NORFOLK, the EARL OF SURREY, LORD STANLEY, RICHMOND, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and SOLDIERS on both sides.

Enter RICHARD, NORFOLK, SURREY, and their army. They set up camp. RICHARD looks confident but restless.

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RICHARD:

Here we are. Bosworth Field. This is where it will be decided. This is where I will crush Richmond and his rebels.

NORFOLK:

Your Majesty, we have more men. More experience. We have the advantage.

RICHARD:

Advantage? I do not need an advantage. I am Richard. I am the king. I have never lost a battle. I will not start now.

SURREY:

My lord, what about Lord Stanley? He has not committed his forces. He says he is waiting. But waiting for what?

RICHARD:

Stanley is a snake. He is waiting to see who will win. He will join the winning side. And the winning side is mine. He knows that. He will come to me.

NORFOLK:

And if he does not? If he joins Richmond?

RICHARD:

Then I will kill him. Just as I killed everyone else who betrayed me.

He paces.

But he will not betray me. He knows what happens to those who betray me. He remembers Buckingham. He remembers Hastings. He will not make the same mistake.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER:

Your Majesty, Lord Stanley sends word. He says he will join you. But he needs time to gather his forces. He asks that you wait.

RICHARD:

Wait? I have waited long enough. Tell Stanley to bring his forces now. Or I will come for him. And I will not be merciful.

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MESSENGER:

Yes, Your Majesty.

The MESSENGER exits.

NORFOLK:

My lord, if Stanley does not come, we will still win. Our army is strong. Our men are loyal.

RICHARD:

Loyal? No one is loyal. Everyone is waiting. Watching. Hoping I will fall. But I will not fall. I will not give them the satisfaction.

He looks at his tent.

I need to rest. Tomorrow we fight. Tomorrow we end this.

He exits into his tent.

On the other side of the field, RICHMOND enters with OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and their army. They are setting up their camp.

RICHMOND:

My lords, tomorrow is the day. Tomorrow we fight for England. Tomorrow we fight for freedom.

OXFORD:

The men are ready, my lord. They believe in you. They will fight for you.

RICHMOND:

I know. And I will fight for them. I will give them everything I have. I will not let them down.

Enter SIR CHRISTOPHER URSWICK.

URSWICK:

My lord, I have news. Lord Stanley sends word. He will join us. When the battle begins, he will come to our side.

RICHMOND:

Good. That is good. With Stanley, we have a chance. Without him, we are outnumbered.

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BLUNT:

Can we trust him? He has not committed yet. He could change his mind.

RICHMOND:

He will not change his mind. He knows Richard is a tyrant. He knows Richard cannot be trusted. He will come to us.

URSWICK:

He also sends a warning. Richard plans to kill you himself. He will try to find you on the battlefield. He will try to cut off the head of the rebellion.

RICHMOND:

Let him try. I am not afraid of Richard. He is a man, just like me. A mortal man. And mortal men can be killed.

HERBERT:

My lord, you should be careful. Richard is a skilled warrior. He has killed many men in battle.

RICHMOND:

I know. But I have something he does not have. I have right on my side. I have justice. I have God. And with God's help, I will defeat him.

He turns to his commanders.

Now, let us rest. Tomorrow we fight. Tomorrow we decide the fate of England. Let us pray. Let us ask God to guide us. To give us strength. To give us victory.

RICHMOND kneels to pray. The others kneel with him.

RICHMOND:

Almighty God, we come before you on this night before battle. We ask for your protection. We ask for your guidance. We ask for your strength. We fight not for ourselves, but for England. For the people. For the future. If it is your will, grant us victory. And if it is not your will, grant us the strength to face what comes. Amen.

ALL:

Amen.

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They rise. RICHMOND looks at his army.

RICHMOND:

Tomorrow, we will be free. Tomorrow, England will be free. Sleep well, my friends. Tomorrow, we make history.

He exits into his tent.

Back in RICHARD's camp. RICHARD enters from his tent. He is alone. He looks troubled.

RICHARD:

I cannot sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see them. The faces of the dead. Clarence. Rivers. Grey. Hastings. Buckingham. The princes. So many faces. So many dead.

He paces.

They haunt me. All of them. They come to me in my dreams. They accuse me. They curse me. They tell me I will die. That I will be forgotten. That no one will mourn me.

He stops.

But I am the king. I am Richard III. I am not afraid of the dead. They are dead. I am alive. I have the crown. I have the power. They have nothing.

He tries to convince himself, but he is shaking.

Tomorrow, I will fight. Tomorrow, I will win. And when I win, the nightmares will stop. They will stop because I will be safe. I will be king. I will have everything I ever wanted.

He looks at his hands.

But will it be enough? Will any of it be enough? The crown. The power. All the blood I have spilled. Will it ever be enough?

He shakes his head.

It does not matter. I am the king. I will not let fear control me. I will not let the dead control me. I am Richard. And I will survive.

He exits back into his tent, but his face shows that he is not convinced.

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ACT 5, SCENE 4

Location: Bosworth Field. The battlefield.

Characters: KING RICHARD III, RICHMOND, LORD STANLEY, NORFOLK, SURREY, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and SOLDIERS on both sides.

The battle is raging. Soldiers fight on both sides. Enter RICHARD, fighting. He is fierce and dangerous, killing anyone who comes near him.

RICHARD:

Where is Richmond? Where is that bastard? Show yourself! Face me like a man!

He kills a soldier who attacks him.

Coward! Hiding behind his soldiers! Let me at him! I will kill him myself!

Enter NORFOLK, wounded.

NORFOLK:

Your Majesty! We are losing! Stanley has joined Richmond! His men are attacking us from the rear!

RICHARD:

Stanley! I knew it! I knew he would betray me!

He kills another soldier.

But it does not matter. I will still win. I am Richard. I am the king. I will kill them all!

NORFOLK:

My lord, we cannot hold! We are being overrun! You must retreat! You must save yourself!

RICHARD:

Retreat? I do not retreat. I am the king. Kings do not retreat. Kings fight. Kings win. Or kings die.

He looks at the battlefield.

Where is Richmond? Someone find me Richmond! I will end this now!

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He charges into the battle.

Enter RICHMOND, fighting. He meets RICHARD. They face each other.

RICHARD:

Richmond! Finally! I have been looking for you!

RICHMOND:

Richard. It is over. Your army is defeated. Your men are running. Surrender. Spare yourself. Spare your men.

RICHARD:

Surrender? I do not surrender. I am the king. I will fight to the death!

RICHMOND:

Then let us end this. You and me. Now.

They fight. RICHARD is fierce, but RICHMOND is younger and stronger. They battle for several minutes. Finally, RICHMOND overpowers RICHARD and kills him.

RICHARD:

My crown... my kingdom... all of it... for nothing...

He dies.

RICHMOND:

It is done. Richard is dead.

He stands over Richard's body.

He was a monster. A tyrant. A murderer. But he was also a man. And he fought to the end. I will give him that.

Enter STANLEY, OXFORD, BLUNT, and other commanders.

STANLEY:

My lord! You have won! Richard is dead! The war is over!

OXFORD:

Long live King Richmond! Long live the King!

The soldiers cheer.

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RICHMOND:

No. Not yet. There is still work to be done. We must unite England. We must heal the wounds that Richard caused. We must bring peace to this land.

He picks up Richard's crown, which has fallen to the ground.

This crown. So much blood has been spilled for it. So many lives lost. So much suffering.

He holds it for a moment, then places it on his own head.

But now, it is a symbol of hope. A symbol of a new beginning. I will wear it, not for power, but for duty. Not for glory, but for justice.

STANLEY:

What will you do now, my lord? How will you rule?

RICHMOND:

I will rule with mercy. With justice. With wisdom. I will marry Elizabeth of York, the daughter of King Edward. I will unite the houses of York and Lancaster. I will end the wars that have torn this country apart for so long.

OXFORD:

A brilliant plan, my lord. The people will love you.

RICHMOND:

I do not want them to love me. I want them to respect me. I want them to trust me. I want them to know that their king is just. That their king is fair. That their king will protect them.

He looks at Richard's body.

Take Richard's body. Give him a proper burial. He was a king, whatever else he was. He deserves that much.

STANLEY:

It will be done, my lord.

RICHMOND:

And let there be no more revenge. No more killing. Richard is dead. His followers are defeated. Let them go home. Let them live in peace. We have shed enough blood.

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He looks at his army.

My lords. My soldiers. We have won. We have defeated tyranny. We have brought hope back to England. Today, we have made history. And tomorrow, we will begin the work of building a new England. An England of peace. An England of justice. An England of freedom.

The soldiers cheer.

RICHMOND:

Now, let us go. Let us bring this news to London. Let us tell the people that Richard is dead. That the war is over. That a new day has begun.

He turns to leave but stops.

One more thing. The princes. Richard killed them. We all know it. But we do not know where they are buried. We must find them. We must give them a proper burial. They were innocent. They deserved better.

STANLEY:

We will search for them, my lord. We will find them.

RICHMOND:

Good. And when we find them, we will honor them. We will remember them. We will make sure that what happened to them never happens again.

He looks at the battlefield.

So much death. So much pain. All for power. All for a crown.

He touches the crown on his head.

I will not let it be for nothing. I will build something from this. I will make England strong. I will make England just. I will make England a place where no one has to live in fear. Where no one has to die for a tyrant's ambition.

He raises his voice.

Let this be the end. The end of the wars. The end of the bloodshed. The end of the suffering. Let this be the beginning. The beginning of peace. The beginning of hope. The beginning of a new England.

The soldiers cheer.

RICHMOND:

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Now, let us go home. We have earned our rest. We have earned our peace.

He exits with his commanders and soldiers. The stage empties, leaving only Richard's body.

ACT 5, SCENE 5

Location: London. The royal palace.

Characters: RICHMOND (now King Henry VII), LORD STANLEY, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and other LORDS.

Enter RICHMOND, wearing the crown. He is accompanied by STANLEY, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and other lords. They gather in the throne room.

RICHMOND:

My lords. The war is over. Richard is dead. England is at peace.

STANLEY:

Thanks to you, my lord. You have saved England from a tyrant.

RICHMOND:

I did not do it alone. We did it together. All of us. The soldiers. The nobles. The people. We all fought for something greater than ourselves. We fought for England.

OXFORD:

What is your first act as king, my lord?

RICHMOND:

My first act is to declare peace. Let there be no more revenge. Let there be no more killing. Let those who fought for Richard be forgiven. Let them go home. Let them live in peace.

BLUNT:

Even those who supported him? Even those who helped him?

RICHMOND:

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Even them. We cannot build a new England on revenge. We must build it on mercy. On justice. On forgiveness.

He pauses.

My second act is to marry Elizabeth of York. She is the daughter of King Edward. She is the niece of the princes Richard murdered. Through her, I will unite the houses of York and Lancaster. Through her, I will bring peace to this land.

STANLEY:

A wise decision, my lord. The people will support it. The nobles will support it.

RICHMOND:

I hope so. For too long, England has been torn apart by civil war. York against Lancaster. Brother against brother. Father against son. It ends now. From this day forward, we are one nation. One people. One England.

HERBERT:

What of Richard's supporters? The ones who are still out there? The ones who might try to rise up against you?

RICHMOND:

I will watch them. I will be vigilant. But I will not rule through fear. I will rule through trust. I will give them a reason to be loyal. I will give them a reason to believe in this new England.

OXFORD:

And the princes? Have you found their bodies?

RICHMOND:

Not yet. But we will. We will search until we find them. And when we do, we will give them a proper burial. We will honor them. We will remember them. They were innocent. They deserved better.

He looks at the crown on his head.

I will be a good king. I will be a just king. I will be the king that England needs. Not for my own glory. Not for my own power. But for the people. For the future. For England.

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STANLEY:

You will be a great king, my lord. I have no doubt.

RICHMOND:

I will try. That is all I can do. I will try to be worthy of this crown. I will try to be worthy of the trust you have placed in me.

He rises.

Now, my lords, let us begin. Let us build this new England. Let us bring peace to this land. Let us make sure that no one ever has to suffer under a tyrant again.

He raises his voice.

Let this be the end of the Wars of the Roses. Let this be the beginning of a new era. An era of peace. An era of prosperity. An era of hope.

ALL:

Long live the King! Long live King Henry VII!

RICHMOND:

Thank you, my lords. Thank you all. Now, let us go to work. England is waiting.

He exits with his lords.

THE END

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